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2nd SS Panzer Division 'DAS REICH'

Bruce Quarrie

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EDITOR: MARTIN WINDROW

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Text by BRUCE QUARRIE

Colour plates by MIKE CHAPPELL

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Bruce Quarrie is former editor of *Airfix Magazine* and author of *Panzer-Grenadier Division 'Grossdeutschland'* and *Fallschirmpanzerdivision 'Hermann Göring'* in this Osprey series; and also of *Napoleonic Wargaming, Afrika Korps* and *World War 2 Wargaming* in the *Airfix Magazine Guide* series, of *Napaleon's Campaigns in Miniature, Tank Battles in Miniature 2: A wargamers' guide to the Russian Campaign 1941–1945, Tank Battles in Miniature 3: A wargamers' guide to the North-West European Campaign 1944–1945,* and of *Tank Battles in Miniature 5: A wargamers' guide to the Arab–Israeli Wars since 1948,* all published by Patrick Stephens Limited, Cambridge.

The divisional insignia is clearly visible on the mudguard of the leading car in this view of 'Reich' personnel entering Belgrade in spring 1941. (Bundesarchiv 77/93/9)

Origins of the Waffen-SS

The SS (*Schützstaffel*) was born in April 1925, shortly after Hitler's release from Landsberg prison, as a squad of a mere eight men devoted to the protection of his life. By the end of 1944, the Waffen-SS ('Armed-SS') had grown to a strength of some 910,000 men in thirty-eight divisions (forty-five including those on which the numbers were doubled up). Originally, the SS was seen as a para-military 'heavy police' force for the protection of internal security within the Reich. After the 'Night of the Long Knives', however, the SS began developing along rather different lines; and in March 1935 the 'political readiness squads', as they had become known (full-time armed units of at least company strength), were officially renamed SS-Verfügungstruppen (SS-VT = SS special purpose troops).

Apart from the SS Leibstandarte 'Adolf Hitler', which had been formed in autumn 1933, the first SS-VT units were the SS-Standarte 'Deutschland', formed from a Bavarian Allgemeine-SS police unit in München in October 1933 under the initial command of Majors Sagerer and Lieber; and the SS-Standarte 'Germania', formed in Hamburg in August 1934 by Hauptsturmführer Wilhelm Bittrich (the later victor of Arnhem). These two units, together with the SS-Standarte 'Der Führer', which was formed in Vienna at the end of March 1938, were the nucleus of what was eventually to become the 2nd SS Panzer Division 'Das Reich'.

In order to comprehend the Waffen-SS one has to understand the prevailing spirit in Germany during the 1930s. The crippling impositions of the Treaty of Versailles had created a Germany which was impoverished, demoralized and resentful. The

Weimar Republic had proved unable to cope with events, particularly inflation, leaving a power vacuum in which any vigorous national revival movement could hardly help but prosper. Scapegoats were sought, and the Jews and Bolsheviks were traditional targets for resentment and aggression which Hitler and his National Socialist (Nazi) organization exploited to the full. This is over-simplification, of course, but the interesting book prepared by HIAG (the Association of Soldiers of the Former Waffen-SS), *Wenn alle Brüder schweigen*, has much to say on the subject. The following extract is particularly pertinent:

'Many factors played a role in motivating volunteers to join the SS-Verfügungstruppe: political convictions, idealism, the desire to change society, the opportunity for advancement, and simple coincidence. Yet, for the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War, it must be realized that some basically decisive motives played a part. The youth of that time enjoyed a healthy and unbroken relationship with the generation of their fathers. Both generations were "on the same side". The generation which had come out of the First World War did not represent a "different Germany" of which everybody washed their hands . . . For this reason the new concept of "soldiering" did not represent at all a sharp break with tradition . . .'

What sort of men *did* volunteer to join the SS? It has often been suggested that they were mere 'bully boys' in stylish uniforms, and even Rommel once commented that 'wherever the SS men were, there was looting and brutality . . .' Certainly in the early days at least there was a strong element of truth in this accusation, as the 'protection squads' attracted many toughs who were only too happy to have semi-official sanction for their acts of violence; but the SS also included many recruits from the Reichswehr and police, who saw it as a force which might bring internal stability to a troubled Germany.

It has often also been argued that members of the Waffen-SS enjoyed fighting for its own sake and were 'unnaturally' aggressive. Although the authors of *Wenn alle Brüder schweigen* try to play down this aspect of SS mentality, even they agree that '. . . a type of warrior spirit was to be found in the Waffen-SS which was neither equalled nor excelled by any other formation.' Moreover, they say clearly that 'no one will deny that a false sense of "aggressiveness" could also be found in the Waffen-SS, nor can anyone deny that within its ranks there existed cases of rashness, or a lack of competence from time to time, and, even worse, irresponsibility.' From former SS-men, an admission indeed, even though they qualify it by adding: 'Yet where is this not to be found in the history of war and the military?'

SS-Gruppenführer und Generalleutnant der Waffen-SS Paul Hausser, commander of the SS-Division 'Reich' from 19 October 1939 to 14 October 1941. He wears the field-grey officer's Schirmmütze with black velvet band, black leather peak, and silver insignia, cords and general officer's piping. His shoulderstraps are of interwoven gold and silver cord on a light grey base. (Bundesarchiv 77/93/33)

I am no apologist for the SS. Yet it must be said that many historians, particularly those in the grip of immediate post-war hysteria, have failed to take into account the very real differences in recruitment, organization and command structure between the Waffen-SS and the organization's other branches, including the Gestapo, concentration camp personnel, economic and resettlement offices and political education section. Moreover, while those excesses perpetrated by members of the Waffen-SS which have been brought to light have been rightly condemned as atrocities and war crimes, it is indisputable that similar 'crimes', including the shooting of prisoners of war, were perpetrated by the Allies—especially the Russians, who cried loudest at the war crimes tribunals. In war, the distinction between a legitimate military action and 'murder' is often unclear, and although SS 'aggressiveness' may account in part for public abhorrence of their deeds, the realistic student of history will recognize the importance of one simple fact in forming post-war attitudes: they lost the war.

The essential difference between members of the Waffen-SS and members of the Wehrmacht ('armed forces', including the Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe, not just the army) was that the latter owed their allegiance to the German state, in practice if not in the actual wording of their service oath, whereas the SS genuinely owed theirs to the person of Hitler. The SS oath makes this very clear: 'I swear to you, Adolf Hitler, as Führer and Reich Chancellor, loyalty and bravery. I vow to you, and those you have named to command me, obedience

unto death. So help me God.' Nevertheless, although the Waffen-SS was controlled directly by the SS-Hauptampt, in time of war it came under the operational command of the OKW (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*) and OKH (*Oberkommando des Heeres*), and in effect if not in name or theory was the 'fourth branch' of the Wehrmacht.

In the early days the army was not only responsible for the military training of SS-VT units, it also controlled the level of recruitment into the SS through the manpower allocation rights of the *Wehrkreise Hauptquartier* (Military District HQ), which reduced the potential growth of the SS by as much as two-thirds. A further factor which kept the strength of the SS down, at least prior to the outbreak of war, was its racial selection policy. From the end of 1935 onwards, every SS recruit was supposed to be able to trace his 'Aryan' pedigree back at least as far as 1800 (although exceptions are known to have been made for those with political 'muscle'). Whether the majority of recruits took this Aryan mythology seriously is questionable! As the war progressed, of course, maintenance of these 'standards' became impossible and, as is well known, the Waffen-SS eventually included several entire divisions of non-Germanic (let alone 'Aryan') personnel.

Recruits for the SS-VT had to be in the peak of physical condition (until 1936 the Leibstandarte would not accept a man if he had a filling in a tooth!), at least five feet eleven inches tall, and between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one. Although there was no specific political test for entry, the fact that a recruit was applying to join an essentially political unit, together with his willingness to take the SS oath, rendered this qualification 'understood'. Enlistment was for a minimum of four years (twelve for NCOs and twenty-five for officers), and the training was extremely rigorous, being founded on the unspoken assumption that 'anything the army can do, we can do better'. Indeed, both SS men and officers were expressly forbidden to use the word 'impossible' in respect of any task they were ordered to perform. A five-mile run in full kit (seven miles if it was raining) was a daily occurrence in many units, and a great deal of time was spent on the ranges and in tactical training. The unusual camaraderie between officers and men within the SS 'brotherhood' helped enormously to develop flexibility and personal initiative in the field, while battle training, using live rather than blank bullets and hand grenades, taught the men a healthy respect for battlefield conditions. Although this caused criticism at the time because of the casualties it created, it is indisputable that it saved many more lives at the front.

(Top left) Hauptsturmführer Fritz Klingenberg, CO of the assault group which captured Belgrade on 13 April 1941. The black-collared officer's tunic appears to lack collar insignia, and the eagle is not an SS item—possibly an Army breast eagle? It is not uncommon to see this type of substitution in early war photos. (Top right) Smiling Untersturmführer displaying the early Gothic 'Der Führer' cufftitle, the officer's belt, and sidecap with *Waffenfarbe* chevron. Note grey-collared tunic; the photo is captioned 1941. (Bottom left) Interesting photo of an SS-Sturmann, his collar with rank patch showing in the collarless neck of his camouflage smock, and wearing the first pattern sidecap with off-set gusset, death's-head button and *Waffenfarbe* chevron on the front, and eagle on a black triangle on the left side. He wears a pistol holster and magazine pouches for the MP38/40 and the pouch for machine-gun tools on his belt. (Bottom right) Another SS-Sturmann in a camouflage smock; equipment includes a mapcase and a stick-grenade. (Bundesarchiv 74/44/64; 77/93/12; 74/75/40; 77/93/11)

As little time as possible was spent on parade ground drill once basic training was completed, except in the Leibstandarte, who earned themselves the somewhat contemptuous nickname 'asphalt soldiers' from other members of the SS-VT. Ideological training, intense before the war, soon lapsed despite strenuous exhortations by the SS-Hauptampt, and the front line troops of the Waffen-SS grew gradually closer in spirit to their brothers-in-arms of the army. This had not always been the case—in the pre-war and early war years there was a distinct coolness between the two; but at the end of the conflict Manstein was to comment that 'the Waffen-SS, like the good comrades they were, fought shoulder to shoulder with the army at the front and always showed themselves courageous and reliable'; similarly, Guderian said that 'The soldiers of the Waffen-SS fought shoulder to shoulder with the regular soldiers and the longer the war went on, the more they counted as some of ours.'

Another criticism which HIAG seems anxious to dispel is that the Waffen-SS suffered abnormally high casualties in action due to incompetent leadership. This scarcely requires comment. SS leadership was, in fact, in many cases considerably

more inspired than in the army,* partly because every officer candidate had to have served for a minimum of two years in the ranks, and partly because of the extremely rigorous training at Bad Tölz and Braunschweig. The fact that there was virtually no class distinction within the SS, the majority of its members coming from the agricultural populace of Germany rather than the traditional military families, also helped. There was little of the 'them and us' feeling between enlisted men and officers which characterized the army. The usual reason why the SS appeared to suffer 'abnormally' high casualties was simply that they were increasingly regarded as being so reliable that they were entrusted with the majority of most difficult and dangerous tasks in the field.

Formation and Early Operations

Returning to the specific history of the 2nd SS Panzer Division 'Das Reich': in the summer of 1934 the Leibstandarte was designated SS 1 (1st Battalion) and the SS-Standarte 'Deutschland' as SS 2. When the SS-VT was officially formed in the following year, the Leibstandarte retained its premier position within the SS as a whole, but the 'Deutschland' was renumbered I/SS 1-VT (i.e. 1st Battalion, 1st SS-VT Regiment). SS-Standarte 'Germania' became I/SS 2-VT. In 1936 these two units were each expanded to three battalions and became regiments in their own right. This expansion grew out of two factors. Firstly, from May 1935, service in the SS-VT became regarded as military service with the armed forces; and secondly, in October 1936, the SS-VT acquired its own general staff in the form of the SS-VT Inspectorate, under the overall command of Paul Hausser. Born in 1890, Hausser had been in the regular army for thirty-three years prior to joining the SS; he commanded the SS-VT Division, later to become 'Das Reich', from October 1939 until the same month in 1941 before being promoted to Korps commander as the Waffen-SS expanded. He lived in Ludwigsburg and died in 1972.

In 1938 the ranks of the SS-VT were swelled by the addition of the third regiment, 'Der Führer', formed in Vienna, also by Bittrich, and shortly after the outbreak of war these three regiments, with additions, were officially recognized as the first Waffen-SS field division. Although it was not fully established until October 1939, elements of the SS-VT Division, including the 'Deutschland' Regiment, the SS artillery regiment, and motorcycle reconnaissance and signals battalions, participated in the invasion of Poland as part of the mixed army/SS battlegroup 'Kempf' (named after its commander, Generalleutnant Kempf). The

The early years of the war saw the Waffen-SS divisions equipped with a motley collection of German, obsolete, and foreign weapons: an ironical situation, considering the abiding cliché that 'the Waffen-SS was so effective because it got the newest weapons'. This junior leader (since his cap is without cords or strap, it is not possible to be more specific) holds the old MP28II machine-pistol, a weapon frequently seen in photos of the Waffen-SS. (Bundesarchiv 73/89/50)

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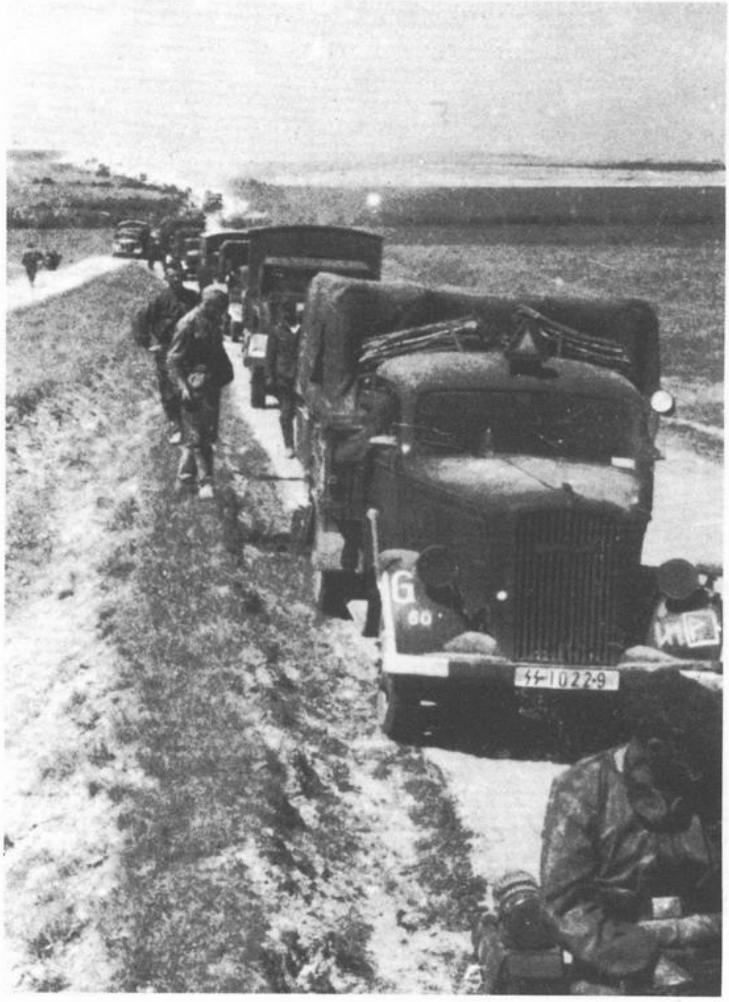
* These comments apply specifically to the major battlefield formations, and not necessarily to the more 'Byzantine' units recruited in eastern and southern Europe, largely for anti-partisan warfare.

'Germania' Regiment was seconded to 14th Army on the right flank, where it took part in the occupation of the industrial zone of Poland and advanced into the Lemberg area. The remainder of the SS-VT units took part in the 3rd Army's advance through Mlawa and Praschnitz, crossing the rivers Narew and Bug, and capped their first victorious campaign by taking the Polish fortress of Modlin by storm.

After the Polish campaign the participating units were sent back to Neidenburg to be re-formed as a true SS division. Each of the three intrinsic regiments, 'Deutschland', 'Germania' and 'Der Führer', consisted of three battalions, each of three companies. Each company had nine machine guns, two anti-tank guns and three mortars. In addition, each battalion had an attached heavy weapons company with six heavy mortars and eight anti-tank guns; and each regiment incorporated a motorized anti-tank company with twelve guns, a towed artillery company with six to eight 7.5cm guns, and a motorcycle recce company. The SS-VT Division (mot), as it was now known, also included an anti-tank battalion of three companies; a motorcycle recce battalion of two companies; an artillery regiment of three battalions, each of three companies with four guns to a company; signals and pioneer *truppen;* and a machine gun battalion, plus supporting troops (supply, medical, etc.). Renamed SS-Verfügungsdivision in April 1940, it was with this force that the formation went to war in the fateful summer of that year.

The 'Der Führer' Regiment came under command of X Korps HQ and stormed the strongly defended Grebbe Line in Holland, pushing through to Amsterdam, while the main body of the division followed up 9th Panzer Division and first went into action against the French and Dutch west of Rysbergen. The 'Deutschland' Regiment especially distinguished itself in the heavy fighting for Flushing, through the flooded polders and minefields, but only succeeded in capturing the two-kilometre causeway to the island of Walcheren after Luftwaffe aid had been summoned.

Withdrawn from Holland on 18 May, the Division was marched by night through Belgium to Flanders where it took part in the battle of Arras as part of von Kleist's Panzer Gruppe. It was then turned north to take over protection of the German right flank against Allied forces which were trying to break out of Belgium to the west, and had a particularly hard battle against British troops in Nieppe Wood from 27 to 29 May, since the British had tanks and the SS at this time did not. After disengaging from this successful action, the Division was allowed a brief rest before being marched south to link up with von Reichenau's 6th Army, subsequently going in with the second wave of the attack on the Weygand Line on 5 June. After crossing the River Somme, the SS troops broke through to the rear of the French positions and were soon on the road through Soissons to Troyes. Their last heavy battle occurred on 16 June against French troops trying to escape west from the Maginot Line; they then took part in the victorious pursuit, marching via Orléans and Bordeaux south to the Spanish frontier by 27 June. After a brief period



'Reich' advances into Russia, summer 1941. The leading Opel Blitz truck bears white formation-keeping bars, the SS number plate, the divisional insignia flanked by the tactical sign of a battalion HQ, and the white 'G' of Panzer Gruppe Guderian. (Bundesarchiv 77/93/28) spent guarding the border with Vichy France and the occupied part of the Biscay coastline, the Division was marched back to Holland, finishing the year near Vésoul.

At the beginning of December 1940 the SS-Regiment 'Germania' was transferred from the SS-V Division to join other SS units in the creation of a new division, originally named 'Germania' and later 'Wiking'. On 3 December the SS-V Division, strengthened by a battalion from the 'Totenkopf' Division, was renamed SS-Division 'Deutschland'. However, it was thought that this might cause confusion with the army's 'Grossdeutschland' formation (see *Vanguard 2*), and at the end of January 1941 it was again renamed, this time as SS-Division 'Reich'.

After Mussolini decided to invade Greece, a coup d'état put Yugoslavia in the Allied camp and German units, including the SS divisions Leibstandarte 'Adolf Hitler' and 'Reich' as well as the army's 'Grossdeutschland', became involved in a hurried and makeshift operation to bolster the wretched Italian cause. The SS-Division 'Reich' was force-marched via Vienna to Rumania, where it fell under Reinhardt's command again. Hausser, in his book *Waffen-SS im Einsatz*, describes their operations:

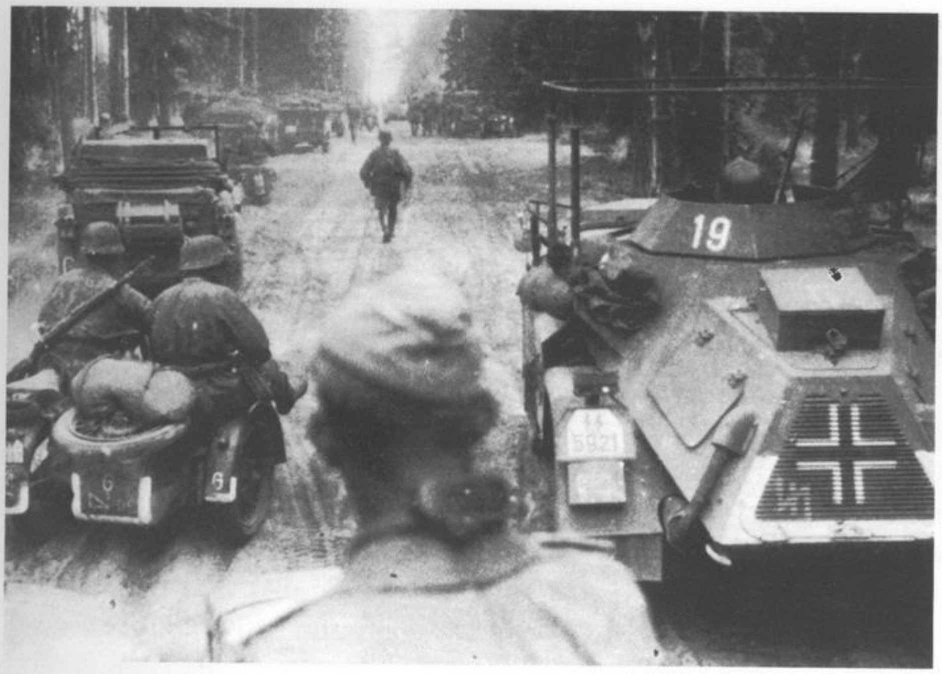
'The operation against Belgrade, the capital city, started with the main troop concentration south of the rivers Drau and Danube. Only Reinhardt's Panzer Korps was employed north of the rivers for mopping up in the Banat and Batschka provinces. It seemed hopeless to try and reach Belgrade from north of the Danube. Nevertheless, an assault party under Klingenberg of the motorcycle battalion got hold of a motor boat and after a hazardous journey, managed to enter Belgrade and force the mayor to hand over the city. Reconnaissance troops of the Army Group, south of the Danube, reached this strongpoint probably at the same time, if not earlier. However, the city was handed over to Klingenberg' (who later became a divisional commander and was killed in 1945).

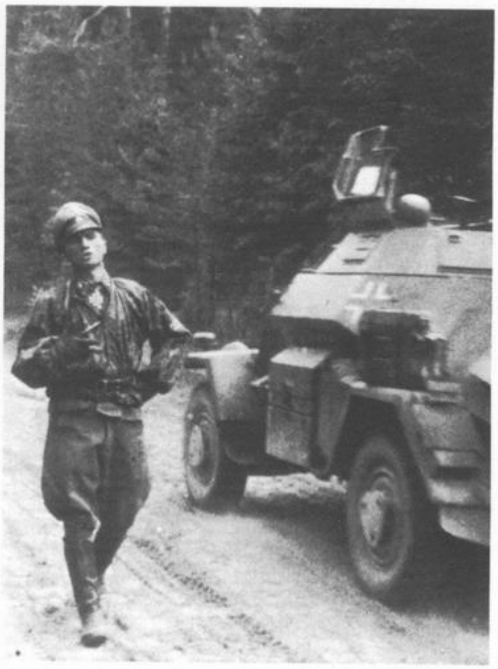
After a short rest south-west of Linz, in Austria, the Division was transferred to Poland, whence it was to take part in the momentous invasion of Russia as part of Guderian's 2nd Panzer Gruppe in von Bock's Army Group Centre.

'Barbarossa'

At 3.30am on the morning of 22 June 1941 the German frontier with Russia disappeared under a dense pall of smoke as an intense artillery barrage opened up. Then the tanks and half-tracks rolled forward, and Operation 'Barbarossa' was under way. The SS-Division 'Reich' was grouped with the 10th Panzer Division and elements of the 'Grossdeutschland' Regiment in XLVI Panzer Korps, under the command of General Freiherr von Vietinghoff. This Korps formed the 2nd Panzer Gruppe Reserve and acted in support of the other divisions forcing a crossing over the River Bug either side of the ancient fortress of Brest-Litovsk. For these operations the 'Reich' Division had been strengthened by the addition of a StuG III battalion.

XLVI Panzer Korps did not get into action properly until 26 June, when it was brought up to safeguard the left flank of the Panzer Gruppe against mounting Soviet resistance, and then participated in the highly successful encirclement of large numbers of Russian troops in the Bialystock pocket. By 2 July the Korps had reached the River Beresina, where elements of the motorcycle reconnaissance battalion 'Reich' managed after hard fighting to secure a bridgehead ten miles south of Beresino. Despite conflicting orders from the High Command, Guderian decided that it was vital to maintain the momentum of his Gruppe's advance towards their first major objective, Smolensk, and ordered a general push towards the line of the River Dnieper. During this operation 'Reich' again provided flank guard, this time on the right, in the vicinity of Pavlovo. The Dnieper was crossed with remarkably light casualties, and XLVI Panzer Korps, including the SS-Division 'Reich', was now ordered to advance via Gorki-Pochinok to Yelnya, while guarding its right flank against a Soviet troop concentration around Mogilev. This task was entrusted to the 'Grossdeutschland' Regiment, while the 10th Panzer Division and the SS 'Reich', accompanied personally by Guderian, pushed on towards Gorki, which they reached on 14 July after heavy fighting and severe casualties, particularly among the artillery. On the 15th, advance elements of the Gruppe (29th Motorized Infantry Division) reached the outskirts of Smolensk, while 10th





Two views of SdKfz 221 and 222 light armoured cars of the division during the advance into Russia, 1941. The left-hand photo shows a car with the insignia of a motorized reconnaissance squadron beneath the number plate, and the divisional sign on the rear engine louvres. The motorcycle combination bears the tactical sign of an anti-tank unit—a right-angled triangle on wheels. On the right, a jaunty-looking Obersturmführer wears the neck of his camouflage smock wide open to display his Knight's Cross. The car in this photo is surprisingly bare of the markings so evident in other shots of this period. (Bundesarchiv 77/93/18, 77/93/19)

Panzer and SS 'Reich' spearheaded a drive south of the city and reached Yelnya in the face of determined Russian counter-attacks from fortified positions. Here they held on for several days despite running very low on ammunition, and on 22 July took 1,100 prisoners and knocked out fifty Russian tanks. Guderian 'visited the foremost unit, the motorcyclists under command of the brave Hauptsturmführer Klingenberg, as I wished to gain a personal impression of the terrain and the situation.' This visit convinced him that the planned attack towards Dorogobusch in the north, designed to link up with Hoth's 3rd Panzer Gruppe, would have to be delayed. Russian pressure was mounting all the time, and on 27 July the badly mauled 10th Panzer Division was withdrawn from the line for a rest, its place alongside SS 'Reich' being taken by the 268th Infantry Division.

At this point in the advance, despite the fact that Hoth had finally succeeded in trapping no fewer than ten Russian divisions in the Smolensk pocket, Hitler made the fateful decision to call off an immediate thrust towards Moscow, and directed Guderian's 2nd Panzer Gruppe to disengage and march south-west towards Gomel to collaborate with 2nd Army in another large encirclement. Dedicating himself to the task with determination if not enthusiasm, for it was an incorrect military decision, Guderian asked for and received reinforcements and began planning the initial stages of the operation, which necessitated the capture of the important communications centre of Roslavl. SS 'Reich' was not involved in this operation, being entrusted instead with the defence of the left flank of the Yelnya salient. Roslavl fell on 1 August after a single day's struggle and four Russian divisions were surrounded, but SS 'Reich' was still involved in heavy defensive fighting, being faced by some eleven divisions, two of them armoured! On 8 August they were withdrawn for a badly-needed rest and refit north-east of Smolensk, and did not take part in the initial stages of the southern push. This proceeded well to begin with but was running into difficulties by the end of the month, and on 2 September SS 'Reich' was ordered back into the fray. Guderian visited the division near Avdeivka on the 3rd, where he met Hausser and 'told him to be prepared to attack Sosnitza on the 4th.' Unfortunately, that evening it began to rain, the dusty roads turned to thick mud and two-thirds of SS 'Reich' became completely bogged down and unable to advance. Determination prevailed, however, and the division succeeded in capturing its objective on the 5th.

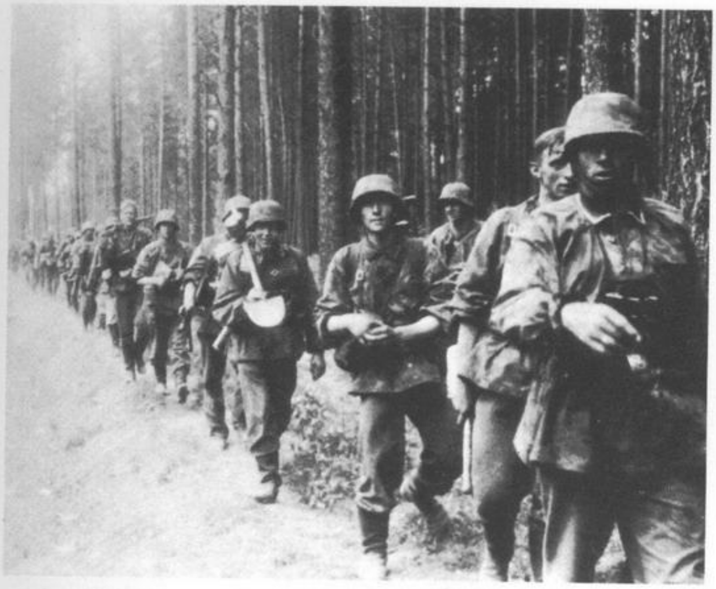
Guderian 'spent 6 September again with SS-Das Reich [sic]. It was engaged in attacking the railway bridge over the Desna, near Makoshino. I went to some trouble to provide air support for this. As a result of the bad roads the whole division was not yet assembled. On the way there I passed a number of its units, some on the march, others resting in the woods. The excellent discipline of the troops made a first-class impression and they loudly expressed their satisfaction at once again forming part of the Panzer Gruppe.' During the ensuing operations, the Division was assigned to the right flank of Guderian's forces, now renamed *Panzerarmee Guderian*, providing the point of contact with the 2nd Army. Bad roads continued to make progress extremely difficult, and aerial reconnaissance was impossible, but the Kiev pocket was finally sealed, trapping the better part of five Soviet armies.

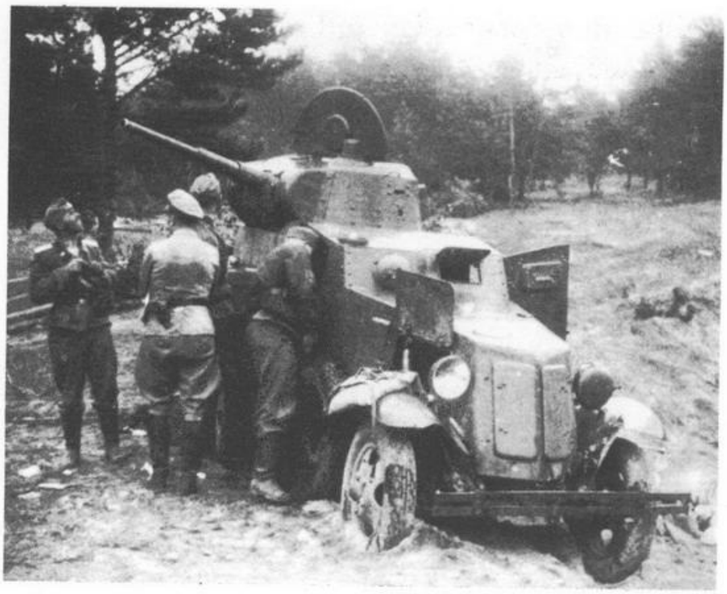
SS 'Reich' was at this time transferred to the eastern wing of the German salient, and captured the town of Romny. On 18 September a crisis developed as the Russians threw in two fresh divisions, one of them armoured, against the town, supported by heavy bombing raids. Nevertheless, SS 'Reich' held firm and five days later was spearheading yet another offensive, in conjunction with 4th Panzer Division, east of Kamlicha. On 26 September the hard-fought battle of Kiev came to an end with the surrender of some 665,000 Russian soldiers and a vast collection of tanks and guns. It was a worthwhile victory, but two months had elapsed, the good weather had almost passed, and Moscow was now to prove an impossible prize.

Operation '*Taiphun*' (Typhoon), the attack on Moscow, opened on 30 September in brilliant autumn sunshine with Guderian's forces beginning their advance through Gluchov towards Orel. SS-Division 'Reich' formed part of the spearhead again, together with three Panzer divisions, a motorized division and the 'Grossdeutschland' Regiment. On 6 October the division was entrusted with the task of cutting the Smolensk-Moscow road between Gzhatsk and Vyasma, completing an encirclement around the latter town. Despite fierce opposition, including continual strafing by Soviet fighters, this phase of the offensive was satisfactorily completed with the capture of the road and rail bridges at Yegorye Kuleshi on the first evening, Kamyonka on the second and Nikolskoya on the third, leaving the division firmly astride the main highway to Moscow. Unfortunately, by this time the weather had broken and when the division moved off at dawn on 9 October it was in the teeth of a howling blizzard.

A three-battalion attack by the 'Deutschland' Regiment succeeded in capturing Gzhatsk and 500 prisoners, while the 'Der Führer' Regiment pressed on along the highway and took two further villages, and the Division's motorcycle battalion wiped out a Soviet transport column. Strong Russian counter-attacks held up the Division's advance for the next two days, the 'Der Führer' Regiment suffering particularly heavy casualties. On the 11th, SS 'Reich' was once more committed to the offensive with Mozhaisk as its major objective. The Russians, supported by tanks and an armoured train, fought with fanatical determination, launching attack after attack against the SS men, but could not close the breaches driven through their lines. The assault was renewed on the 12th and the village of Shulevo captured, by which time the Russians were in full retreat along the whole line. Kalinin fell on the 14th but Soviet reinforcements were rushed to the Mozhaisk sector, which still held doggedly.

The historic battleground of Borodino fell to the 'Der Führer' Regiment on the 15th; the SS 'Reich' Division was then entrusted with the capture of the important crossroads six kilometres to the south-west of Mozhaisk. The cornerstone village of Artemki fell on the 17th, but the closer the SS troops approached the crossroads, the fiercer the opposition became, and their self-propelled guns had a hard task beating off the constant waves of T-34s. Nevertheless, the crossroads was reached on the 18th, and by 3pm two battalions of the 'Deutschland' Regiment had entered Mozhaisk itself, supported by tanks from 10th Panzer Division. Here the Russians fought furiously, and for a time it seemed as though the SS troops would be ejected. Then Klingenberg's motorcycle detachment found a weak spot in the enemy line which Hausser immediately exploited, driving on down the Moscow highway towards Mikhailovskaya. On the 21st a surprise flank attack by Mongolian troops halted the 'Deutschland' Regiment, but despite temperatures of fifteen degrees below freezing and inadequate winter clothing, the SS fought back; they took Mikhailovskaya, then Grachevo and

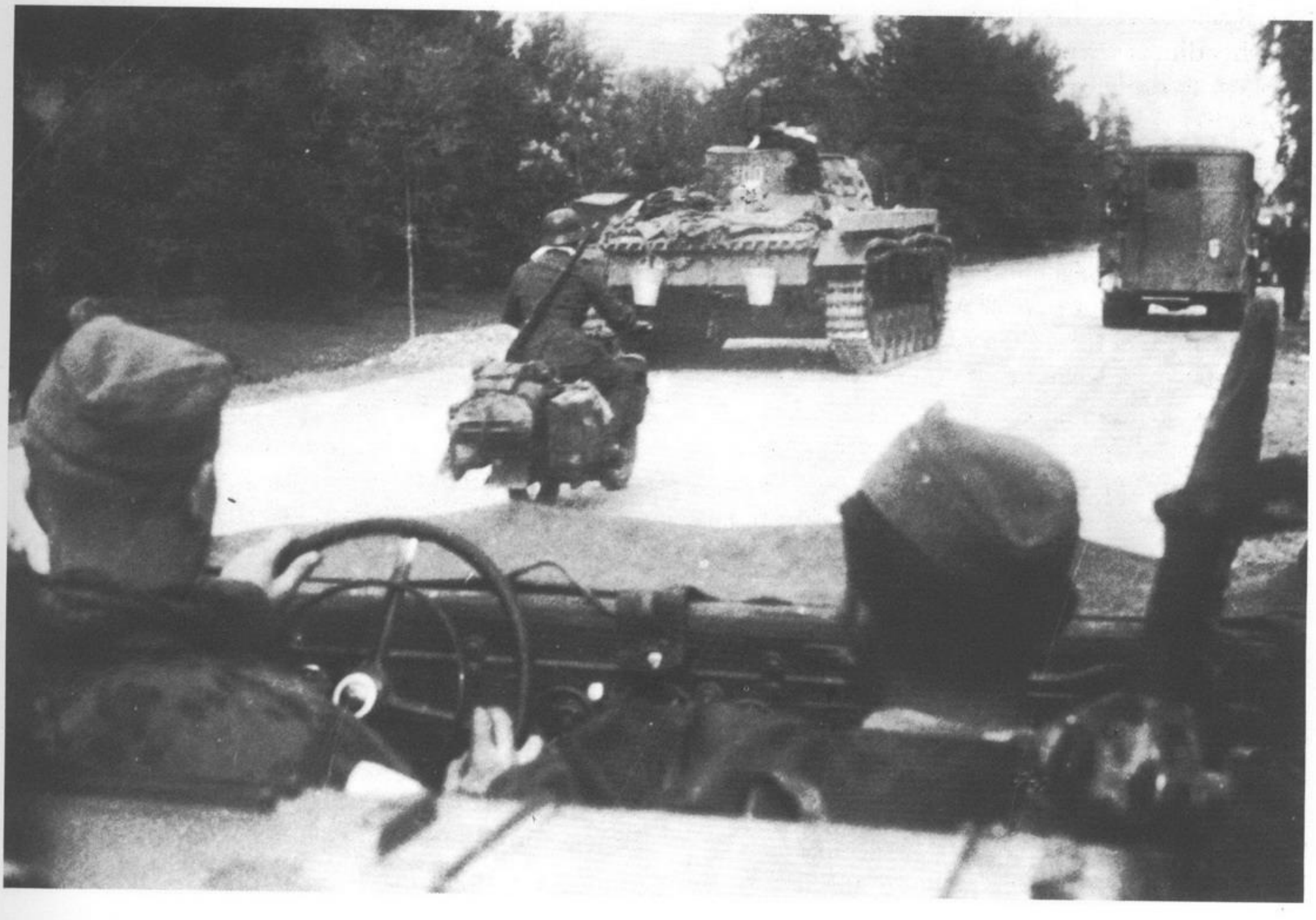




Pushkino, but were halted by enfilading fire in front of Borosivo. After artillery support had been rushed up, this town fell on the 22nd.

Moscow was only forty miles away, but the SS 'Reich' Division had shot its bolt. In three weeks it had lost nearly 7,000 killed, wounded and missing; and although frost improved the going, allowing the Germans to get within eighteen miles of Moscow in one place, by the end of November it

Left: The endless advance into Russia. Note NCO *Tresse* round collar of leading figure, but also the fact that he and the third man seem to wear no collar patches. **Right:** Officers of the division examine a BA-10 armoured car; the light jacket worn by the central figure is puzzling, as it is not thought that tropical clothing was issued as early as this. **Below:** Back-seat view of the advance; both men wear smocks and field-grey sidecaps. The tank crewman sitting on the turret of the PzKw III wears a camouflage smock over his black uniform. The turret number '200' identifies a tank of the HQ section of the 2nd Company. (Bundesarchiv 77/93/21, 22, 14)



StuG III with short-barrelled 7.5cm gun, photographed in a Russian village in summer 1941. Despite the poor quality of the photo it is quite possible to identify the black Panzer suits worn by the crew, presumably with shoulderstraps piped artillery red. Note divisional and Panzer Gruppe markings on the track-guards. (Bundesarchiv 77/93/25)

had become obvious that the city was not going to fall that winter. Zhukov's defences were too strong, and the majority of German units were too tired, depleted and cold to go on any longer. At the beginning of December, Zhukov launched a counter-offensive in front of Moscow with no fewer than eighteen fresh divisions, and by Christmas Day 1941 almost all of the objectives taken during Operation '*Taiphun*' had been recaptured.

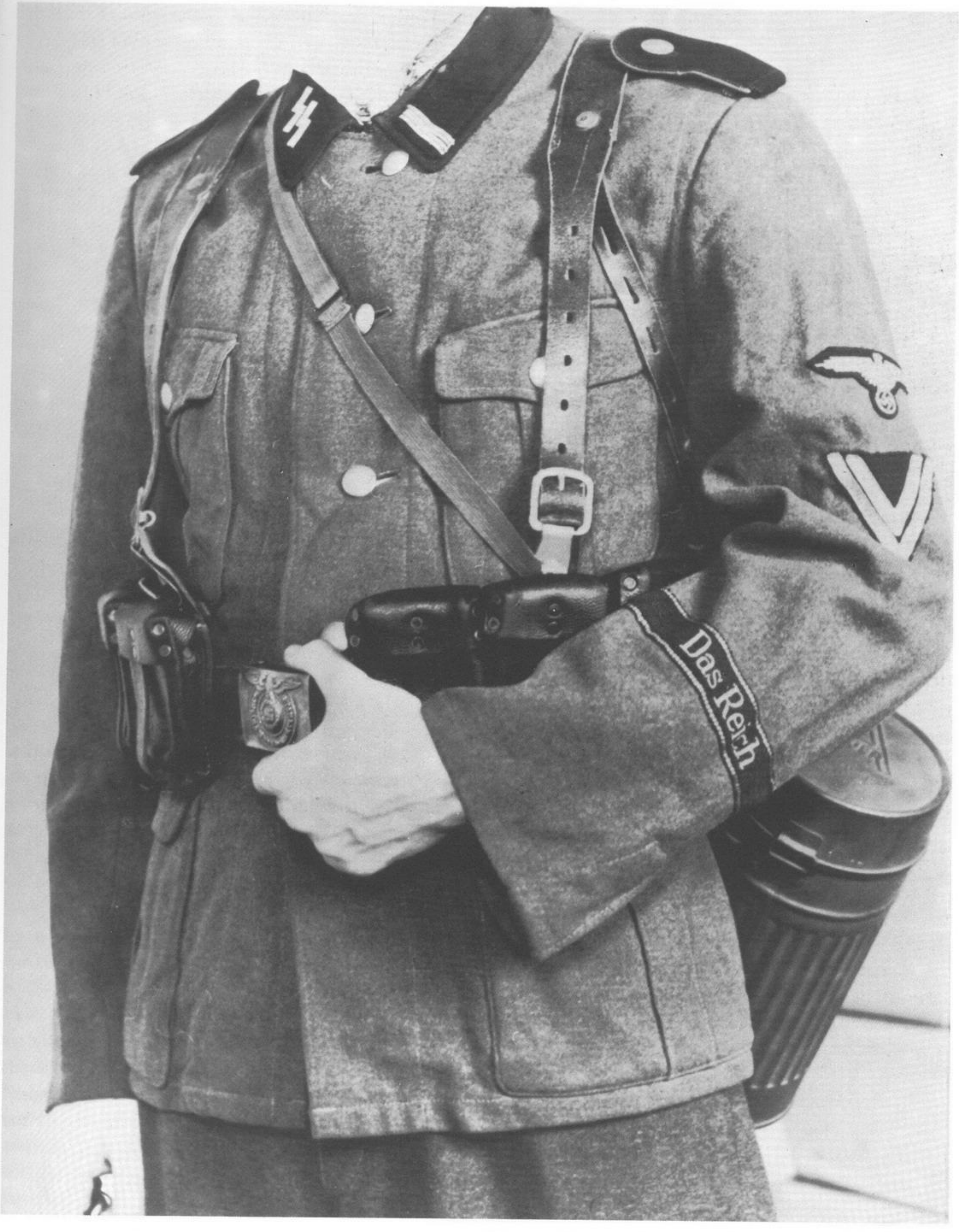
SS 'Reich' Division suffered heavily in the winter defensive fighting before Moscow—a further 4,000 casualties by mid-February—and in March 1942 it was withdrawn from the line and sent to north-west France to recuperate, have its strength brought up to scratch, and to be re-formed as a Panzer-Grenadier division. Two mixed battalions from the decimated 'Deutschland' and 'Der Führer' Regiments remained in Russia as a battlegroup under Werner Ostendorff, who would later command the entire division for a brief period.

The reconstituted division, renamed 'Das Reich' in May 1942, fell under the command of SS-Gruppenführer Georg Keppler. Apart from its reinforced parent units, the Division included the new SS-Kradschützen (motorcycle) Regiment 'Langemarck', which took part in the vain German attempt to prevent the scuttling of the French fleet at Toulon in November. Apart from this, the Division saw no action during 1942, but was thrust back into the rigours of the Russian campaign, together with the Leibstandarte 'Adolf Hitler' and the 'Totenkopf' Divisions, at the beginning of 1943: the year of crisis for Germany. The sweeping German advances of 1942 had over-extended their lines, von Paulus's 6th Army had surrendered at Stalingrad, the Americans had come into the war, Rommel had been defeated at second Alamein, and it seemed that German forces were in retreat on all fronts. The three divisions of the SS-Panzer Korps were now attached to Army Group South (Don).

Campaigns of 1943

After advancing into Kharkov during February, Hausser's SS-Panzer Korps was threatened with encirclement by strong Soviet forces and, despite a hysterical 'hold at all costs' order from Hitler, Hausser took the courageous decision to evacuate and withdraw his divisions behind the river Uda. SS 'Das Reich' made a sixty-mile march on the 16th to close a gap in the German lines, essential to Manstein's plan of drawing the Russian forces into a trap. By the 21st the Germans were in position for his counter-stroke, and three days later Popov's armoured corps had been surrounded and virtually annihilated. By 9 March Hausser was in a position to launch an attack to recapture Kharkov, which he did on the 10th. 'Das Reich' and the Leibstandarte 'Adolf Hitler' formed the spearhead of this operation, supported for the first time by significant numbers of Tiger tanks, and the city fell in five days' bitter fighting.

Both sides paused to regroup and rethink. Both were exhausted. However, Manstein had succeeded in stabilizing the German line with the exception of a large Russian salient to the north of Kharkov, around Kursk, and the German position was much stronger than it had been a month earlier. Moreover, although the disaster of Stalingrad and the long retreat from the Caucasus were tragic from the German viewpoint, lines of communication and supply had been shortened, and the Germans now enjoyed a higher density of troops



Close-up of tunic of Army cut and style, typical of the first half of the war, with the insignia of an SS-Rottenführer, the divisional cufftitle, and the basic infantry equipment.

Divisional and tactical markings of a motorized infantry regiment's 12th Coy. are clearly visible on this vehicle. The smiling troopers, photographed in Russia, summer 1941, are apparently enjoying a spot of target practice. One cannot help wondering, from their relaxed air, exactly what they are shooting at . . . (Bundesarchiv 77/93/26)

in the front line than at any previous time during the Russian campaign. But whether future German operations were to be strategically offensive or defensive, the Kursk salient had to be eliminated.

Unfortunately, the attack was delayed too long, for a variety of reasons, allowing the Russians time to build up their defences in the salient—to lay minefields, to establish anti-tank 'killing grounds', and to create strong mobile reserves. In the event, Operation '*Zitadelle*' (Citadel) did not get off the ground until 4 July. In the southern sector the SS-Panzer Korps formed the spearhead of 4th Panzer Army, the 'right hook' of a pincer movement designed to entrap the Soviet forces concentrated in the Kursk salient. Von Mellenthin observed that the terrain 'over which the advance was to take place was a far-flung plain, broken by numerous valleys, small copses, irregularly laid-out villages, and some rivers and brooks; of these the Pena ran with a swift current between steep banks. The ground rose slightly to the north, thus favouring the defence. Roads consisted of tracks through the sand and became impassable for all motor transport during rain. Large cornfields covered the landscape and made visibility difficult.'

The attack opened at 3pm on the hot and sultry afternoon of 4 July, preceded by a short but sharp artillery bombardment. Flanked on their left by the 48th Panzer Korps and on their right by Army Detachment 'Kempf', the SS divisions—which by this time included strong elements of Tigers and the new Panther tanks—made good initial progress, penetrating the positions of the 52nd Guards Rifle Division and thrusting towards Pokrovka. On their left, 48th Panzer Korps also made good progress, but Kempf's group was seriously held up and the SS right flank was threatened. The advance continued more slowly on the 5th, the SS units heading towards Prokhorovka through the second line of Soviet defences. On the 6th, however, rain delayed the advance until mid-afternoon, and the Panzers only succeeded in covering twelve miles. By the 7th, after only three days' fighting, the SS-Panzer Korps' original complement of 200 Panthers had been reduced to a mere forty although they claimed the destruction of 400 Soviet AFVs. The early Panthers suffered from a variety of defects, one of the worst being a tendency to catch fire very easily.

The 8th and 9th saw little German progress, and on the 10th the Russians went over to the counter-attack. The largest tank battle of the campaign took place on the 12th, between some 700 tanks in the SS-Panzer Korps, approximately a hundred of which were Tigers, and roughly 850 of Rotmistrov's AFVs. 'By evening knocked-out tanks of both nations littered the steppes and smoke from burning machines darkened the skies above the salient.' The fighting had been intense, often at point-blank range, and both sides displayed a high degree of determined courage. But the men of Hausser's Korps proved the stronger, and in the end Rotmistrov was forced to withdraw. However, losses on both sides had been heavy—about 350 tanks each—and the Germans now lacked the strength to resume the offensive. Operation '*Zitadelle*' was abandoned on 13 July and the German forces fell back on the defensive.

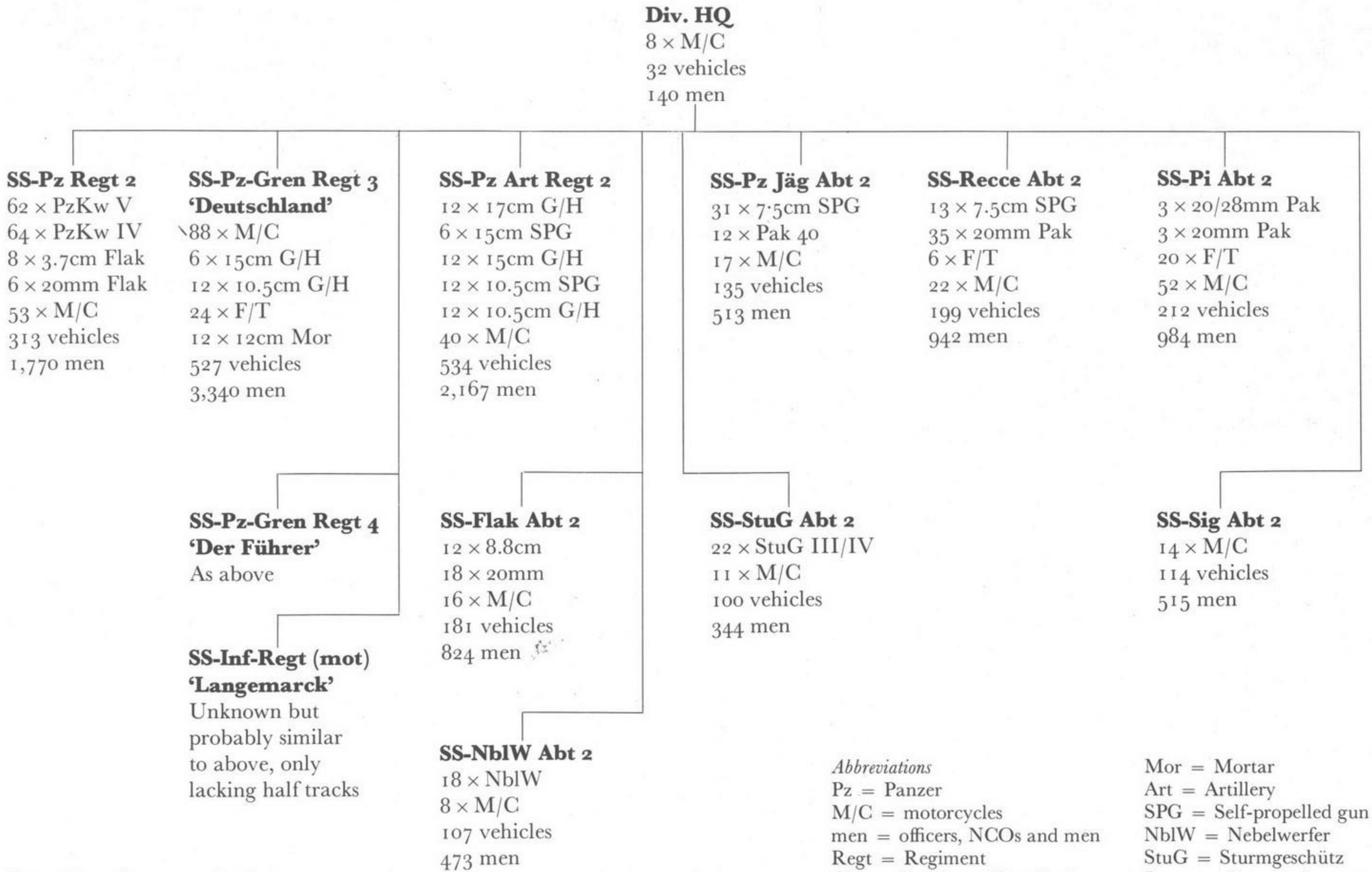
The deteriorating situation in Italy now claimed Hitler's attention, and on the 17th he ordered the SS-Panzer Korps out of the front line to hold itself in readiness for a transfer. In the end, however, only the Leibstandarte 'Adolf Hitler' was sent, leaving 'Das Reich' and 'Totenkopf' to face the renewed Russian onslaught. The next three months saw the German forces reeling back in disorder on all fronts despite desperate delaying actions by SS 'Das Reich' and other crack units. Kharkov and Kiev both fell; but in November a fresh counter-offensive, spearheaded by the SS divisions (including the Leibstandarte, hastily recalled from Italy), succeeded in checking the Russian advance. A see-saw situation developed with both sides attempting to encircle isolated groups of their opponents, sometimes successfully, at other times vainly.

The West, 1944

In December an advance party from SS 'Das Reich' returned to East Prussia for the purpose of reorganizing the formation as a fully fledged Panzer division, and in early February 1944 elements of the Division began arriving at their new training centre in Bordeaux. A battlegroup, Kampfgruppe 'Lammerding' (named after its commander, Oberführer Heinz Lammerding) remained in Russia, where it was caught in the Cherkassy pocket and formed the rearguard while other German units escaped. In April the majority

Again, the quality of these photographs taken from wartime contact prints is not high, but nevertheless they convey a striking impression of the fighting in Russia. They show personnel of 'Das Reich' crossing a road under fire in a blazing town; and crossing a river, possibly the Dnieper, in inflatable assault boats next to a bridge destroyed by the retreating Soviet forces. (Bundesarchiv 73/83/66, 77/93/23)

2nd SS Panzer Division 'Das Reich', 1944



Div. HQ
8 × M/C
32 vehicles
140 men

SS-Pz Regt 2
62 × PzKw V
64 × PzKw IV
8 × 3.7cm Flak
6 × 20mm Flak
53 × M/C
313 vehicles
1,770 men

SS-Pz-Gren Regt 3 'Deutschland'
88 × M/C
6 × 15cm G/H
12 × 10.5cm G/H
24 × F/T
12 × 12cm Mor
527 vehicles
3,340 men

SS-Pz Art Regt 2
12 × 17cm G/H
6 × 15cm SPG
12 × 15cm G/H
12 × 10.5cm SPG
12 × 10.5cm G/H
40 × M/C
534 vehicles
2,167 men

SS-Pz Jäg Abt 2
31 × 7·5cm SPG
12 × Pak 40
17 × M/C
135 vehicles
513 men

SS-Recce Abt 2
13 × 7.5cm SPG
35 × 20mm Pak
6 × F/T
22 × M/C
199 vehicles
942 men

SS-Pi Abt 2
3 × 20/28mm Pak
3 × 20mm Pak
20 × F/T
52 × M/C
212 vehicles
984 men

SS-Pz-Gren Regt 4 'Der Führer'
As above

SS-Inf-Regt (mot) 'Langemarck'
Unknown but probably similar to above, only lacking half tracks

SS-Flak Abt 2
12 × 8.8cm
18 × 20mm
16 × M/C
181 vehicles
824 men

SS-NblW Abt 2
18 × NblW
8 × M/C
107 vehicles
473 men

SS-StuG Abt 2
22 × StuG III/IV
11 × M/C
100 vehicles
344 men

SS-Sig Abt 2
14 × M/C
114 vehicles
515 men

Note: These figures are for the division at full establishment. Excluded are medical and MP units, etc.

Abbreviations
Pz = Panzer
M/C = motorcycles
men = officers, NCOs and men
Regt = Regiment
Abt = Abteilung (Battalion)
Pz-Gren = Panzer-Grenadier
G/H = Gun/Howitzer
F/T = Flamethrower
Mor = Mortar
Art = Artillery
SPG = Self-propelled gun
NblW = Nebelwerfer
StuG = Sturmgeschütz
Recce = Reconnaissance
Pi = Pioneer
Sig = Signals
Inf = Infantry

of the survivors were also sent to Bordeaux, leaving just the small Kampfgruppe 'Weidinger' still in the east. This unit was heavily engaged during its retreat through Proskurov and Tarnopol.

The organization of the reconstituted 2nd SS Panzer Division 'Das Reich' can be seen in the chart opposite and it was with these forces that the Division marched north in June 1944 to meet the Allied invasion in Normandy. During this operation two incidents occurred which have earned the Division a black name.

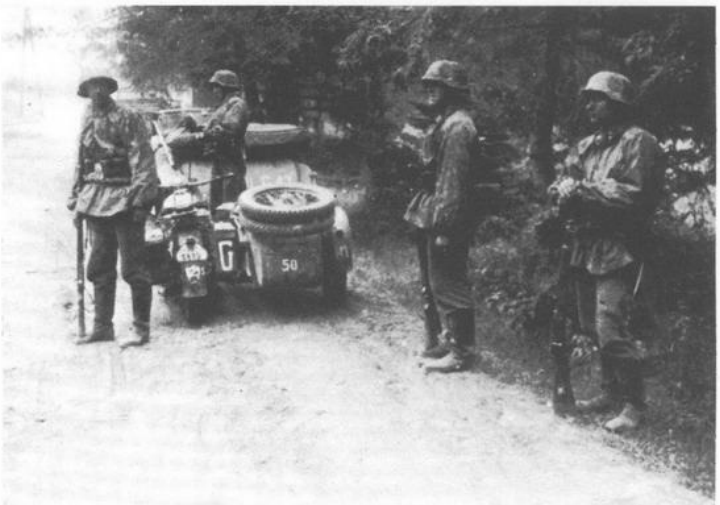
Fighting their way into the little town of Tulle, which had been captured by the French Resistance, the Division's reconnaissance unit discovered the mutilated corpses of sixty-two German soldiers who had apparently surrendered to the partisans and been killed out of hand. In reprisal, ninety-nine Frenchmen suspected of belonging to the Resistance were hanged. It is perhaps possible to justify this as a genuine act of war rather than as the 'massacre of innocents' it has sometimes been described as, but what followed at Oradour cannot. As the Division passed close to this town, a French sniper shot and killed an SS Hauptsturmführer. In reprisal a company leader from the 'Der Führer' Regiment ordered the entire population of 642 men, women and children to be murdered, and the town was blown up and burned to the ground. There was never any serious suggestion that any one of the villagers could be connected with the killing of the officer; the troops who carried out the massacre were seasoned veterans; and the atrocity was committed calmly and methodically, not in a wave of battlefield hysteria. Oradour remains the most damning answer (known in the West) to the most frequently heard arguments of SS apologists, and a terrible stain on the record of German arms.

Arriving in Normandy, the division was thrown into the line north of St Lô, where it faced the American divisions which had landed on Omaha and Utah beaches. A series of counter-attacks failed to throw the Americans back into the sea, and when they broke out from the beachhead at Avranches, the 2nd SS Panzer Division 'Das Reich' found itself encircled at Coutances. They succeeded in breaking out of this trap on 29 July, however, and then captured Mortain, but had to withdraw in common with other German forces to avoid being wiped out piecemeal by Patton's fast-moving forces. The Division was lucky enough to escape being trapped in the Falaise pocket and, indeed, was largely instrumental in holding the twenty-four mile 'neck' of this pocket open, enabling a large number of German troops to get out before the trap snapped shut. Retreating slowly across the river Seine in August, the Division retired behind the West Wall in September.

While the Allies maintained relentless pressure on the German lines, Hitler was reorganizing his forces for his final gamble—the Ardennes offensive. For this operation, 2nd SS Panzer Division 'Das

A blurred but extraordinary photo which says more about combat than a thousand words: a front line cameraman freezes forever a moment of frantic activity—and fear?—for a 'Das Reich' machine gun squad loaded with spare ammunition boxes. (Bundesarchiv 73/83/58)

A brief halt for a reconnaissance unit. The motorcycle combination carries, from left, a company tactical sign, the 'G' of Guderian's Panzer Gruppe on the back of a pannier, the vehicle number '50', and the divisional sign. (Bundesarchiv 77/93/17)



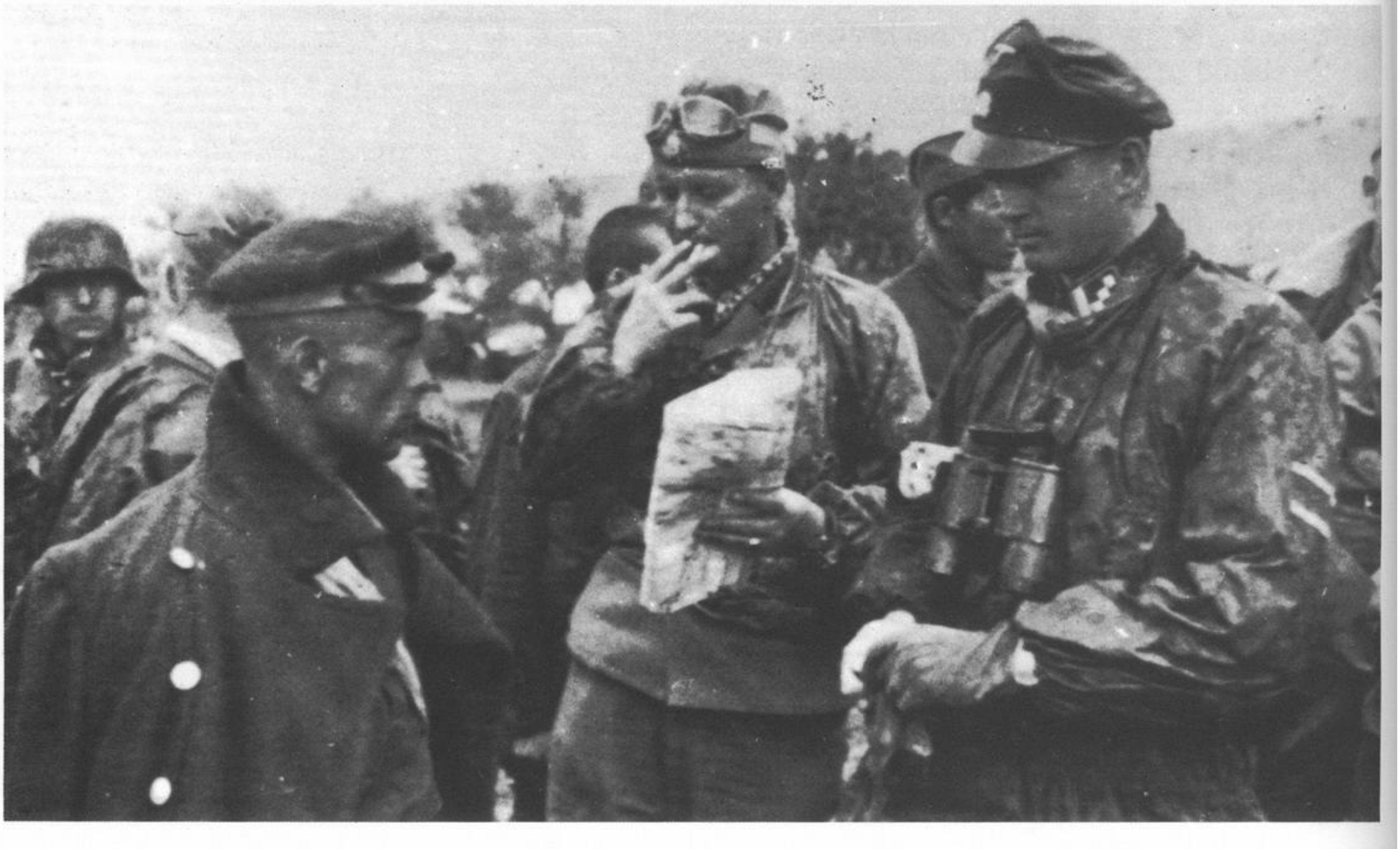
Reich' was seconded to Sepp Dietrich's 6th Panzer Army, where it formed the north flank reserve. On 19 December it was transferred to Manteuffel's command and thrust through the positions of the American 82nd Airborne Division at St Vith, pushing on to within sight of the River Meuse by Christmas. However, 101st Airborne's heroic defence at Bastogne (see *Vanguard 5*) had halted the main impetus of the German thrust, reinforcements were brought in against their flank and, worst of all, the skies cleared, allowing Allied aircraft to operate again. A large part of the 'Das Reich' Division was cut off and captured by two Allied divisions at the end of the year, and the remainder retreated.

Hastily refitted once again, the division was finally sent to Hungary, where it fought a steady delaying action against the Russians, retreating slowly into Austria. It stubbornly defended Vienna until 15 April 1945 but was finally forced to evacuate. The 'Der Führer' Regiment was engaged fighting the insurrection in Prague at the beginning of May, and succeeded in getting a large part of the city's German population away from the Russian advance. Germany surrendered on 7 May, and the majority of 'Das Reich' personnel entered American captivity.

Equipment and Uniforms

Vehicles and markings

There was no difference between the vehicles and weapons used by the German army, Luftwaffe field divisions and Waffen-SS, and these have been outlined in my two previous books in this series on the 'Grossdeutschland' and 'Hermann Göring' Divisions (*Vanguards 2* and *4*). However, many commentators have made the point that the Waffen-SS was better equipped than the army, and here the HIAG book *Wenn alle Brüder schweigen* again has something relevant to say. It has already been noted that the army controlled the level of recruitment into the Waffen-SS and, says HIAG, the 'Waffen-SS did not have its own Ordnance Office and was thus dependent on the Wehrmacht in this respect. The Waffen-SS did not produce its own equipment, nor did it have a separate system of



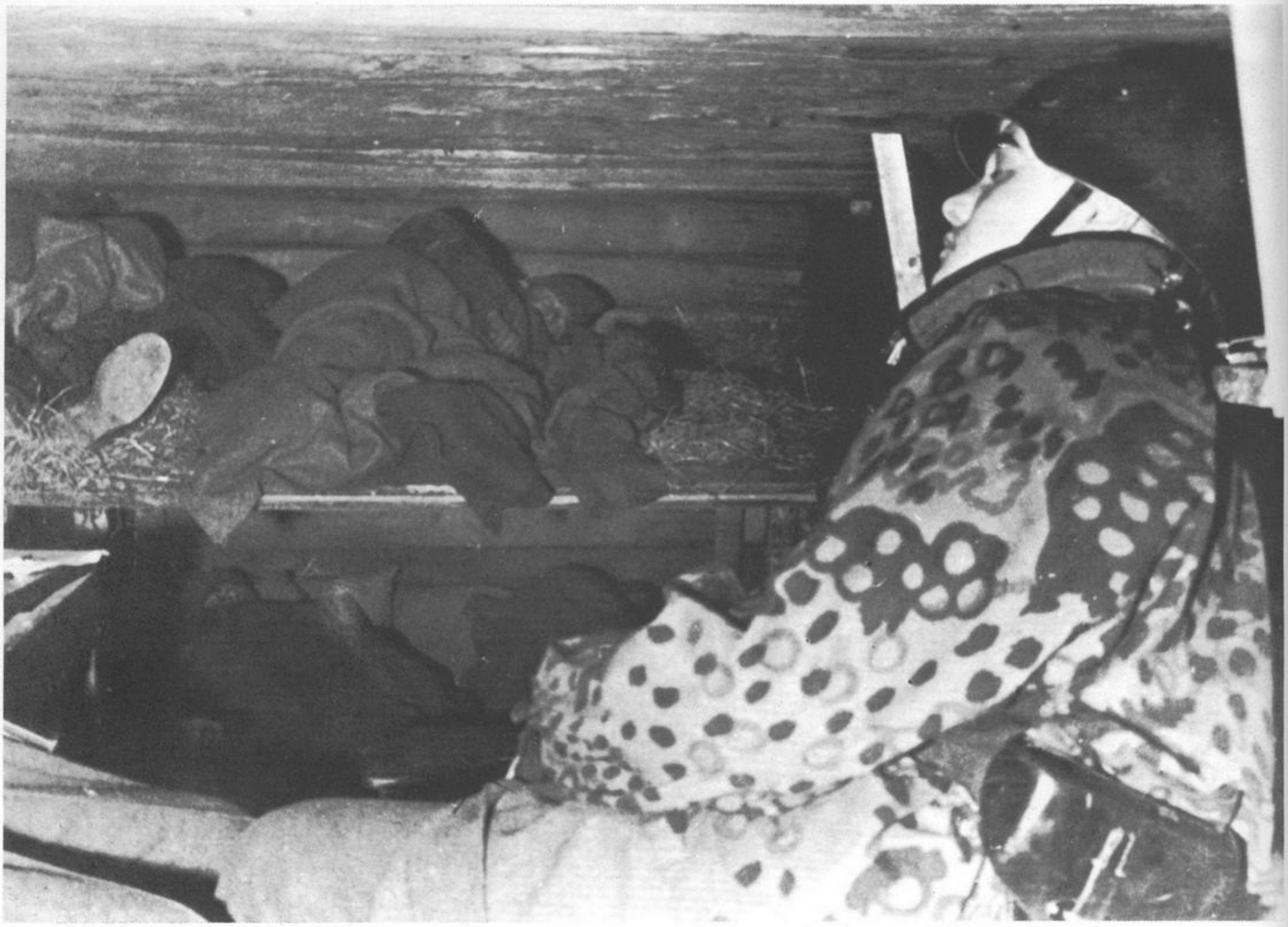
Captured Soviet officer or commissar being questioned by 'Das Reich' officers, including a Hauptsturmführer (right) wearing the 'old style officer's field cap' without cords and with soft leather peak. The lighter strips on his left arm appear to be loops for the attachment of foliage rather than an insignia. (Bundesarchiv 73/81/69)

ПРОЛЕТАРИИ ВСЕХ СТРАН СОЕДИНЯЙТЕСЬ!
С.С.
С.Р.

Jubilant NCOs and enlisted men with a captured Soviet banner. In the original print it can be seen that the early field-grey sidecap with button insignia and off-set fold are still worn in this 1941 photo. (Bundesarchiv 77/93/16)

acquisition and distribution. All requisitions made by Waffen-SS units engaged in combat with regard to the provision of weapons, vehicles and other gear, were forwarded directly through *Army* channels to the highest Army Ordnance Offices and the High Command of the Waffen-SS was duly informed. The Army then examined these requisitions to determine whether or not they were justified, and then acted accordingly.' Thus, argues HIAG, to suppose that the SS was better equipped implies that the Army deliberately provided them with more than was their due—which does seem unlikely. In one area the SS did profit, however, and this was entirely due to Hitler's personal intervention. This was in the allocation of new Tiger and Panther tanks as they appeared. First batches seem almost invariably to have gone to the SS. The overall truth of the matter, as always, probably lies somewhere in between.

Be that as it may, SS vehicles employed exactly the same camouflage and marking systems as the Army. Up until winter 1942–43 all vehicles were normally painted a dark grey shade, and thereafter a dark sandy yellow. Cans of red-brown and dark green paint were issued with each vehicle so that crews could camouflage their individual vehicles to blend in with their current surroundings, although such schemes seem normally to have been restricted to armoured vehicles and were more rarely applied to 'soft-skin' trucks, etc. National crosses, in black, black and white or plain white, were applied to the sides of most vehicles, and sometimes to the front and rear as well. These areas more usually sported tactical and divisional devices in white or yellow, however. The SS used the same system of tactical signs as the Army, and these are outlined in my book on the 'Grossdeutschland'. Divisional signs were personal to the unit concerned, and those utilized by the 'Das Reich' are illustrated in the photos and colour plates. AFV turret numbers, normally of three digits identifying company, troop



Snatching a rest in the relative comfort of a straw-filled bunker, this 'Das Reich' trooper wears over his greatcoat a camouflage smock with a pattern differing from that on previous and subsequent pages. (Bundesarchiv 73/104/27)

and vehicle respectively, were painted in black or red, frequently with a white outline. Aerial recognition flags—black swastikas in white circles on red fields—were commonly draped across engine covers or other suitably flat areas. The only real identifying feature—and this normally applied only to soft-skin vehicles—was the number plate. These consisted of black figures on a white base and, whereas Army vehicles prefixed their number plates with the letters 'WH', SS vehicles used the SS runes followed by the registration number.

Uniforms

It is both presumptuous and futile to attempt to cover the vast and complicated subject of Waffen-SS clothing in the limited space available here when there are so many good books already available on the subject. It is covered in brief in Martin Windrow's book *World War 2 Combat Uniforms and Insignia* (Patrick Stephens Ltd) and in slightly more detail in Walther-Karl Holzmann's *Manual of the Waffen-SS* (Almark) and Windrow's *The Waffen-SS* (Osprey), all of which are readily and inexpensively available. For those who wish to delve into the subject more deeply then the multi-volume *Uniforms, Organization and History of the Waffen-SS*, by Roger James Bender and Hugh Page Taylor (R. James Bender Publishing), and *Uniforms of the SS*, by Andrew Mollo (Historical Research Unit) are the 'last word'. It is inevitable, therefore, that the following remarks will of necessity exclude a great deal but, in keeping my comments strictly

Comparison of this photograph of 'Das Reich' troops in an assault boat with other views reveals clearly the variations in the pattern of camouflage material used for smocks and helmet covers. Variations in the shades and combinations of green and brown were supposed to be seasonal, but under front line conditions it seems certain that before long the differences would have been purely arbitrary in most cases. (Bundesarchiv 73/83/34)

The winter draws in, and these infantry of the division have taken to wearing their camouflage smocks over their field-grey greatcoats—a common practice, to judge from photographs. (Bundesarchiv 73/86/15)

related to 2nd SS Panzer Division 'Das Reich', I hope to provide enough information for the average enthusiast and modeller/wargamer.

The Waffen-SS evolved from the SS-VT as we have seen, its first field division being created by an order dated 10 October 1939. Broadly speaking, its members wore clothing closely related in style and cut to that issued to regular Army personnel, which is described in more detail in my first book in this series, *Panzer-Grenadier Division 'Grossdeutschland'* (Osprey, 1977). The basic clothing issue, which was supplemented as shall be related, consisted of: steel helmet; four-pocket tunic which could be worn open or closed at the neck with or without a field grey shirt and black tie (originally brown shirts were also permitted, but these were prohibited by an order dated 15 September 1943); long trousers (enlisted men and NCOs) or breeches (officers); black marching boots (enlisted men and NCOs) or riding boots (officers); black belt with a variety of buckles which will also be described; field cap (in various styles); and peaked cap in one of two basic styles (officers and NCOs only).

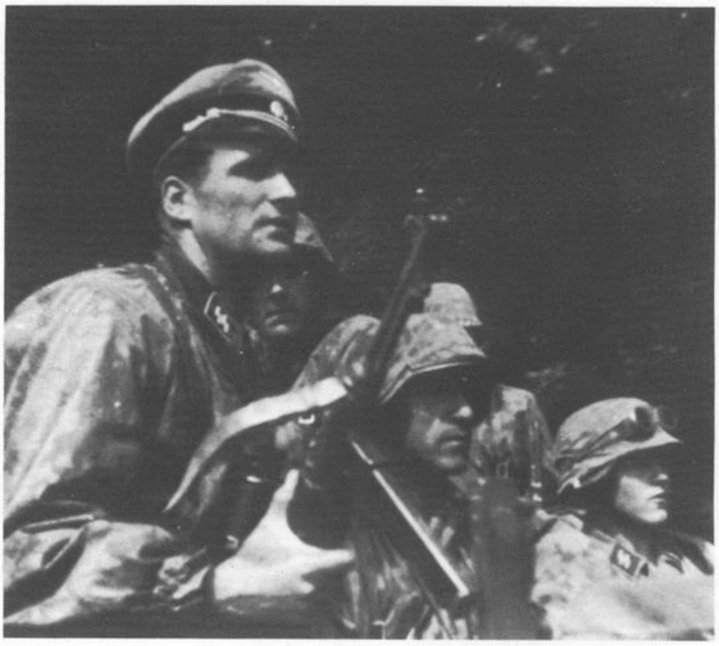
The standard issue steel helmet or *Stalhelm* worn by SS personnel was the M1935 pattern which replaced the large and cumbersome First World War headgear. This was supplemented later by the M1943 helmet which was of similar design but lacked the inward crimped edge, facilitating manufacture and economizing on steel. Both types had an inner aluminium-sprung leather lining and black leather chinstrap, and were painted field grey. Originally the helmet bore two decals, that on the right-hand side being a silver or white shield with the double SS 'lightning flash' runes in black and that on the left-hand side being a red shield containing a black swastika on a white disc. The latter was discontinued after spring 1941 as being too conspicuous in the field, and the former from autumn 1943, although isolated examples of both continued in occasional use until the end of the war. Even prior to their official removal, however, it was common for combat troops in the field to daub their helmets with mud or dust to camouflage them and to cover the gaudy decals. Foliage was frequently tucked into bands around the helmet, and various nets, bits of chicken wire, and so forth were improvised in the field to hold camouflage materials. Helmets were whitewashed in winter, or less frequently, fitted with improvised white cloth covers. There were also two patterns of purpose-made camouflage helmet cover peculiar to the Waffen-SS, fitted with a series of spring hooks and a 'pocket' at the front accommodating the helmet brim. One type was reversible in spring and autumn mottle, the other in summer mottle and plain white.

Apart from the helmet, all ranks were issued with undress field caps. Initially the SS-VT had a special type with the top fold offset to the right, but this was replaced early in the war by a conventional cap with a central fold and 'scooped' turn-up in the Army fashion; this, in its turn, was replaced from 1940 by a third design identical to the Luftwaffe *Fliegermütze* but in field grey, with a continuous 'unscooped' edge to the turn-up. These grey caps had silver piping round the top of the turn-up for officers. The first, offset style bore a death's-head embossed on a grey-green button on the front of the turn-up and a silver-grey woven eagle and swastika on a black triangular patch on the left side at the top of the turn-up. The conventional types had the eagle and swastika at the front of the crown and a death's-head on the front of the turn-up, both in silver-grey on black. The usual *Waffenfarbe* piping chevron was sometimes but not always worn.

The SS-pattern eagle was also worn on the upper left arm of most garments except camouflage smocks (and very occasionally, even on them). It existed in a number of slightly differing forms and materials, but was silver-grey for enlisted ranks and silver for officers, on a black ground. Basically similar to the Army and Navy eagles, with head facing right and a mobile swastika in a circular wreath held in the talons, it differed most noticeably in the shape of the wings. Where Army and Navy eagles had the ends 'clipped' in a wedge shape, the longest feather at the top, the SS type had the longest feather in the middle, giving a roughly pointed end.

The SS eagle was also used on belt buckles. Enlisted men wore the conventional German forces' rectangular buckle plate with a raised design showing the eagle emerging from the broken top edge of a circular riband bearing the motto 'Meine Ehre Heisst Treue'—'Loyalty is my honour'. Officers had a more ornate circular plate, but in the field usually wore the plain two-prong frame buckle. Belts were black.

The most popular form of headgear worn by all ranks of all German services was the 1943 peaked field service cap or *Einheitsfeldmütze*. Based on the shape of the mountain troops' cap, but with a longer peak, it had a 'scooped' turn-up buttoned at the front so that it could be turned down round the ears in cold weather. One- and two-button versions are known. On the single-button type there was just room to stitch the eagle and the death's-head insignia on the front of the crown above the turn-up, but on the two-button type with a deeper front to the turn-up only the *Totenkopf* was worn here, and the eagle was worn at the top of the turn-up on the left side, immediately right of the 'scoop'. In 1944, special, smaller badges were produced comprising an eagle above a death's-head on a truncated triangular base of either field grey, or black for the black Panzer version of the cap. Officers wore higher quality badges, and had caps piped silver round the crown seam. The *Einheitsfeldmütze* was made in grey, in black for Panzer crews, and in camouflage mottle material. A loose white cover was available for winter use, but is seldom seen in photos.



Officers' and enlisted men's SS-rune collar patches clearly displayed over the neck of the smocks; the officer with the MP40 wears the Schirmmütze. (Bundesarchiv 74/43/10)

SS officers wore four basic types of cap in the field. Their silver-piped versions of the sidecap and field cap were common. Also popular was the 'old style officer's field cap', a smaller, softer version of their peaked service dress cap. It had a small, grey, unstiffened crown, usually worn pulled sharply back; a semi-stiff peak of soft black leather or field-grey cloth; and a black band. Band edges and crown seams were piped in *Waffenfarbe*. There were no cords, and the eagle and death's-head badges on crown and band were normally worn in a flat, woven version. The service dress cap, or *Schirmmütze*, was of conventional German shape—an elegant, high-fronted cap with a small semi-circular peak of glossy black leather. The field-grey crown was stiffened, though the wire former was often removed in the field to give a jauntier appearance; the band was black, and the piping at crown seam and band edges was in *Waffenfarbe*. Two heavy silver bullion chin-cords were worn across the top of the peak; and heavy white metal eagle and *Totenkopf* badges were worn on crown and band respectively.

A young Unterscharführer wearing an improvised snow-camouflage smock and helmet cover over his greatcoat; grenades are tucked behind both sets of cartridge pouches. (Bundesarchiv 73/86/33)

Tank crews were issued black versions of side and field caps, and also made much use of the camouflaged field cap. Officers wore their service dress or 'old style field' caps. In 1939–40 the fledgeling armoured formations were issued with the padded beret, and in 1941 some armoured car crews, at least, were still wearing a black version of the off-set sidecap with the button on the front.

Originally all Waffen-SS troops wore white *Waffenfarbe*, but in the autumn of 1940 a sequence of separate branch-of-service colours was adopted, similar to that of the Army. This piping appeared on officers' peaked caps, and sometimes as the chevron enclosing the lower badge on enlisted men's field caps; around the outer edges of enlisted ranks' shoulderstraps; and as the underlay of officers' shoulderstraps, mounted between the silver cord and an extra, black underlay. In very occasional cases early in the war it was seen as collar piping, or piping around collar patches. For general officers it was pale grey; for infantry, white—including Panzer-Grenadiers; for artillery, self-propelled artillery and flak troops, red; for tank and anti-tank troops, including SP anti-tank units, rose-pink; for cavalry and motorized recce troops, golden yellow; for signals, lemon yellow; for supply personnel, light blue; for medical personnel, dark cornflower blue; and for military police, orange. (For a more complete list, readers are referred to Bender and Taylor, *op.cit.*)

From 1937 the SS-VT wore a field grey uniform similar in general appearance to that of the Army. It had slanting slash skirt pockets with external flaps. From 1940 this gave place to a tunic with four box-pleated pockets with three-point buttoned flaps, the stand-and-fall collar being initially black, but later usually in Army dark green. In the mid-war years economy patterns with straight pocket flaps, unpleated pockets and plain grey collars began to supersede earlier types. Trousers were straight for enlisted men while officers wore flared breeches; boots were initially knee-length marching boots of heavy leather for non-commissioned ranks and black riding boots for officers, but from 1942 short laced ankle-boots worn with grey webbing anklets became more and more widespread. Although it does not seem to have been as common in the SS as it was in the Army, a final economy tunic was introduced in 1944. This *Feldbluse* was similar to a British battledress blouse, waist-length, round-bottomed, with two plain patch pockets with straight flaps.

Obersturmbannführer Werner Ostendorff, commander of Kampfgruppe Ostendorff from March to June 1942, and commander of the entire division from 4 February to 9 March 1945. (Bundesarchiv 77/93/34)

Armoured vehicle crews started the war wearing Army style black Panzer vehicle uniforms; later, an improved cut of jacket was introduced into SS units, with slightly smaller and more rounded lapels than the Army pattern. From 1941 at least, SP gun crews were wearing a field-grey pattern of the basic armoured vehicle jacket and trousers. *Waffenfarbe* was as in the Army except that SS anti-tank gunners wore pink instead of red; and the collar piping was different. Unlike the Army's rose-pink collar piping for all ranks of Panzer units, the SS did not (apart from a short and very early period) wear any collar piping for enlisted ranks, and officers wore silver piping.

Ranking was indicated on shoulderstraps and collar patches. In the following list I have added equivalent German Army ranks but, since there are no exact parallels in the non-commissioned ranks, I have not tried to draw comparisons with British and US ranks:

SS-Schütze, later **SS-Grenadier**
(Same Army ranks)
Plain black shoulderstraps piped with *Waffenfarbe*; plain black left patch; silver-grey SS runes on right patch.

SS-Oberschütze *(Same Army rank)*
Straps, patches as above; single silver 'pip' on black disc, left upper arm below eagle.

SS-Sturmann *(Gefreiter)*
As above, plus two close-set lines silver piping down front edge of left patch; single silver-grey chevron on black triangle, left upper arm.

SS-Rottenführer *(Obergefreiter)*
Four lines piping on left patch, two sleeve chevrons.

SS-Unterscharführer *(Unteroffizier)*
Single pip on left patch; no sleeve ranking; silver *Tresse* braid round all but outer edge of shoulderstraps, inside *Waffenfarbe* piping; same *Tresse* round front and bottom edges of collar (this applies to all NCO ranks above this rank).

SS-Scharführer *(Unterfeldwebel)*
Tresse round all edges shoulderstraps; one pip and two piping lines on left patch.

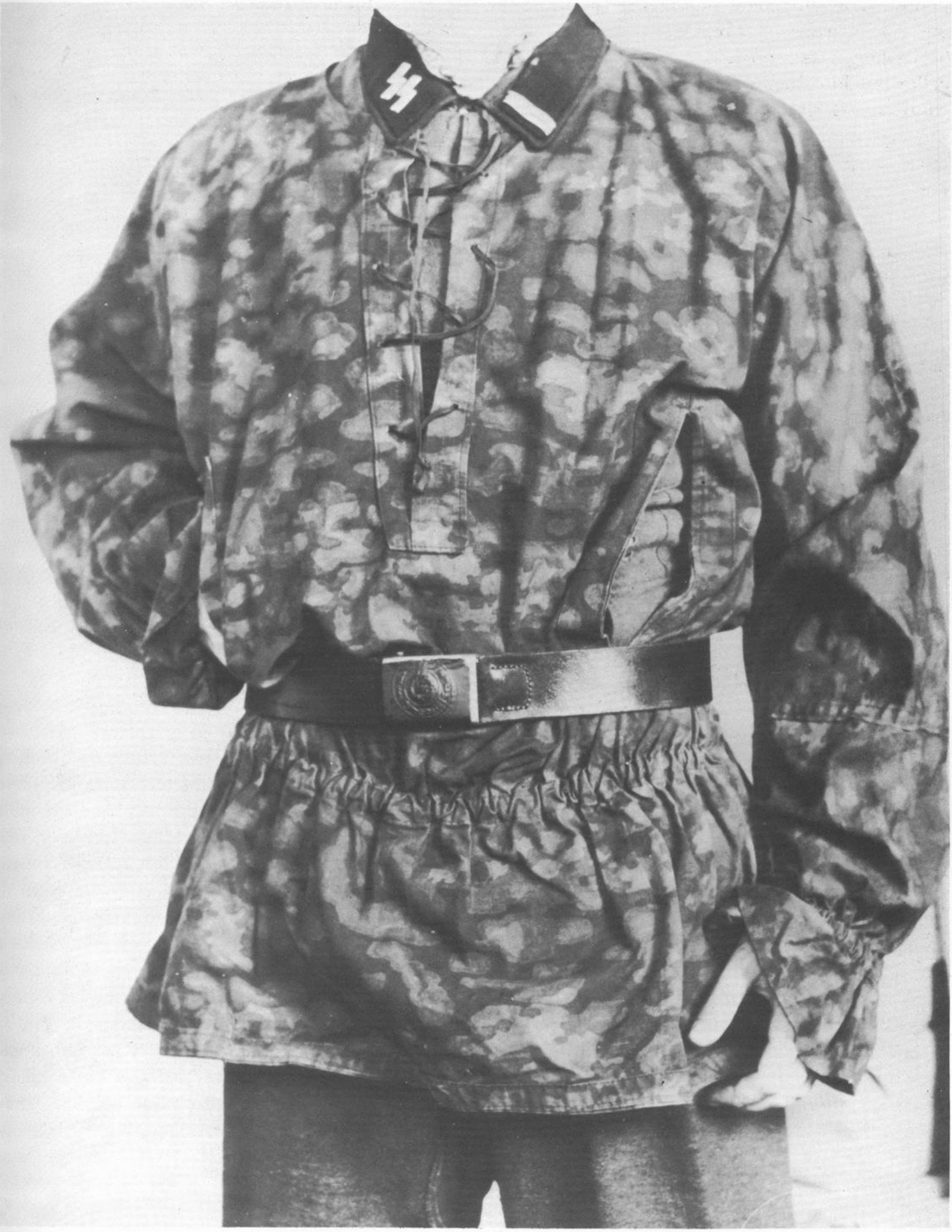
SS-Oberscharführer *(Feldwebel)*
Straps as above plus single pip; left patch with two pips.

SS-Hauptscharführer *(Oberfeldwebel)*
Two pips on straps; two pips plus two lines piping on left patch.

SS-Sturmscharführer *(Stabsfeldwebel)*
Three pips on straps; two pips, four lines piping on left patch.

All commissioned ranks had collar patches edged in silver cord, and shoulderstraps with a silver cord body on a double underlay of *Waffenfarbe* over black:

SS-Untersturmführer *(Leutnant)*
Three pips on left patch; plain cord straps.



Left: Unselfconscious study of a 'Das Reich' squad pausing for a five-minute break in thick Russian woodland. (Bundesarchiv 73/83/48)

Above: Close-up of one of the early patterns of SS camouflage smock, showing vertical pocket slashes in the chest, drawstring neck, and elasticated waist and cuffs.

SS-Obersturmführer *(Oberleutnant)*
Three pips plus two lines piping on left patch; one pip on shoulderstraps.

SS-Hauptsturmführer *(Hauptmann)*
Two pips on shoulderstraps; three pips, four lines piping on left patch.

SS-Sturmbannführer *(Major)*
Four pips on left patch; shoulderstraps of plaited cords.

SS-Obersturmbannführer *(Oberstleutnant)*
One pip on shoulderstraps, four pips plus two lines piping on left patch.

SS-Standartenführer *(Oberst)*
Single silver oakleaf on *both* patches; two pips on shoulderstraps.

SS-Oberführer *(Generalmajor)*
As above, but two oakleaves on each patch.

SS-Brigadeführer *(Generalleutnant)*
From 1942, three oakleaves on patches, and shoulderstraps of plaited gold and silver cord.

SS-Gruppenführer *(General)*
As above, plus one pip on each patch and shoulderstraps.

SS-Obergruppenführer *(Generaloberst)*
As above, with two pips on patches and straps.

SS-Oberstgruppenführer *(Generalfeldmarschall)*
From 1942, as above with three pips on patches and straps.

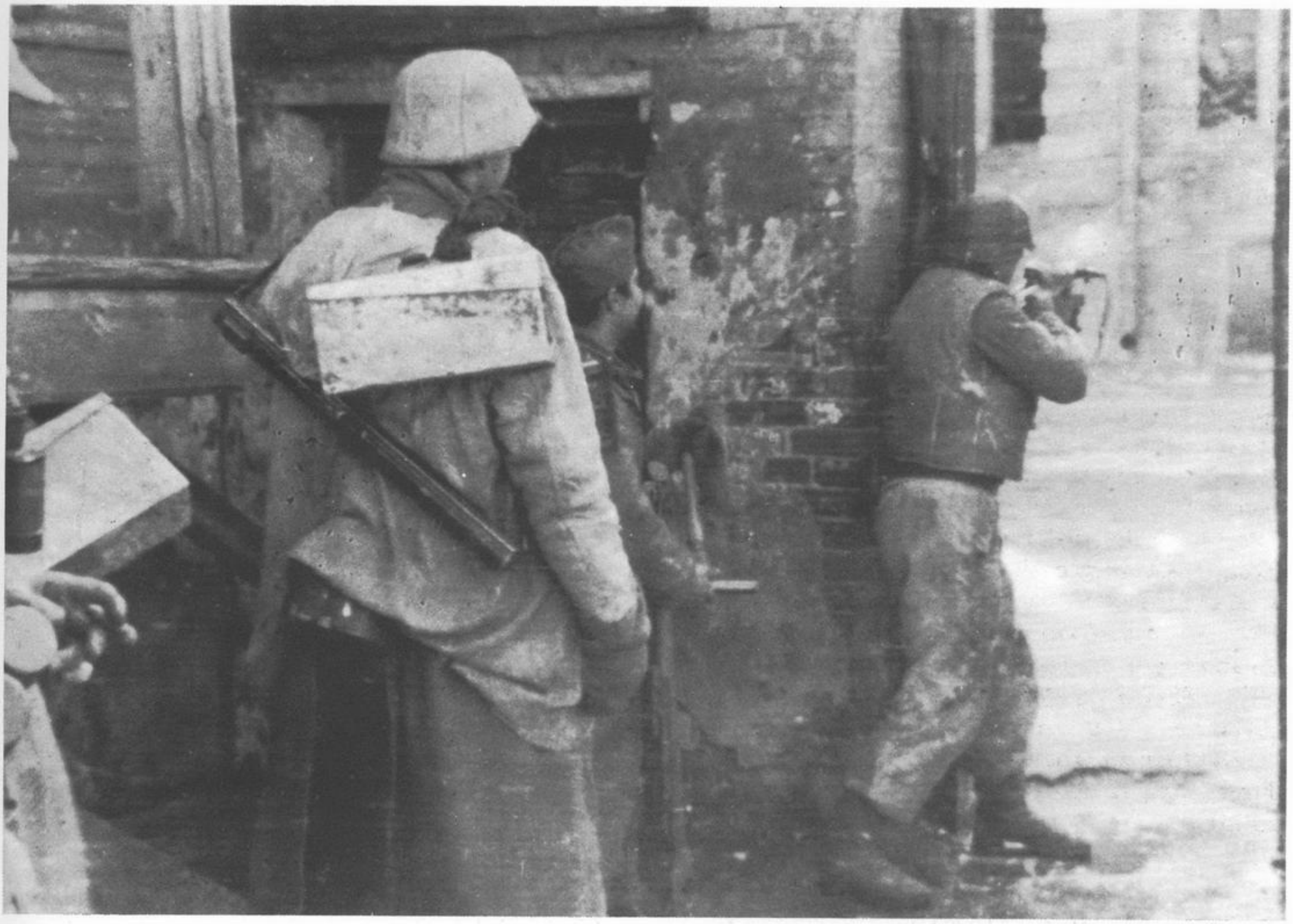
Several examples of these insignia can be seen in the colour plates. Note that prior to winter 1941, there was no Sturmscharführer rank, and pips on officers' shoulderstraps were gold—they became silver at that time.

In 1939–40 the regiments 'Deutschland', 'Germania' and 'Der Führer', which formed the nucleus of the SS-VT Division (Motorized), bore the Arabic numerals 1, 2 and 3 respectively on the right-hand collar patches in the front bottom corner ahead of the runes. They also wore distinctive regimental cufftitles of black material, 2·8cm wide, sewn 15cm up from the bottom of the left sleeve. Embroidered with silver or silver-grey thread according to rank, they had embroidered edge stripes and the regimental name in Gothic lettering. All other divisional personnel wore a cufftitle lettered 'Das Reich', from 1 September 1942. The 4th SS Infantry Regiment, which became SS Infantry Regiment 'Langemarck' in April 1942, had its own interim cufftitle in block lettering, and personnel are believed to have worn the three-legged swastika—'Trifos'—in place of the SS runes on the right patch. Men from the former SS Totenkopf Regiment 11, disbanded in November 1941, were dispersed to the 'Deutschland' and 'Der Führer' regiments and may have retained their *Totenkopf* collar patch device for a time.

The 'Germania' regiment was transferred from the SS-VT Division in November 1940 to form the nucleus of the new SS Division (Motorized) 'Germania', which was renamed 'Wiking' at the end of that year and subsequently became the 5th SS Panzer Division 'Wiking' in February 1944. A further distinction authorized for the three original named regiments of the 'Das Reich' Division were monograms worn on the shoulderstraps in the form of block letters 'D', 'G' and 'DF'; these should have been in *Waffenfarbe* thread, silver metal and gold metal for enlisted men, NCOs and officers respectively, but photographic evidence for their wear in the field is scanty and they may have been kept for special occasions. Bender and Taylor state that some Latvian recruits may have served in the 'Das Reich' Division, and Latvian armshields have been observed worn in conjunction with the divisional cufftitle; these were red, with or without black border, bearing the white legend 'LATVIJA' and a white diagonal.

SS greatcoats were similar to Army models, being long double-breasted garments with two rows of six buttons, and slanted slash skirt pockets with external flaps with rounded corners. The large fall collar was dark green initially; from the mid-war period on, it was made in plain field grey like the rest of the coat. Collar patches, shoulderstraps, sleeve eagles, cufftitles and rank chevrons were all worn on the coat, though not universally. Many officers affected elegant black or dark green leather greatcoats purchased privately; insignia on these were limited to shoulderstraps. In winter a variety of fur coats and hats were to be observed.

Winter clothing for Waffen-SS personnel followed normal Army practice and was issued initially from exactly the same stocks. They improvised light snow-camouflage smocks, ponchos and helmet covers in 1941–42, and received the white/mouse grey reversible padded winter suit with hood and mittens in 1941–43. Subsequently this was produced in white reversed with SS-pattern mottle camouflage (see Plate E). A part, at least, of the front line strength of the



'Das Reich' infantry during street fighting in Kharkov, March 1943. The soldier firing on the right wears a sheepskin vest over his tunic, and the reversible white/mouse grey winter combat trousers. The centre figure, in snow camouflage smock and greatcoat, is an MG42 team member; he has a spare barrel slung in its canister on his back, and an ammunition belt box. (Bundesarchiv 73/84/51)

Waffen-SS in Russia received in the winter of 1942 a grey thigh-length fur-lined parka with a large hood, but production was discontinued the following year, presumably so as not to duplicate wastefully the Army's winter clothing programme.

For summer wear in the front lines, SS troops relied on the simple expedient of taking their tunics off and fighting in shirtsleeves, or wearing the camouflage smock (see below) without tunic or shirt beneath it. Officers were permitted to discard tunics in very hot weather; normally the shoulder-straps were fixed to the shirt, but it was unusual to see other insignia applied, such as sleeve eagles. Knight's Cross holders would normally wear the shirt buttoned to the neck, with their prized decoration worn on the ribbon passing under the shirt collar. For summer wear there was a white version of the service tunic, on which the normal rank and unit distinctions were worn. It seems to have had a limited popularity with officers and—occasionally—senior NCOs behind the lines, but was in no sense a front-line item. Waffen-SS units serving in semi-tropical environments, such as southern Russia and Italy in the summertime, were issued tropical uniforms from Army and Luftwaffe stocks; the smart sand-drill Luftwaffe clothing seems to have been favoured over the olive-drab Army issue. A version of the SS sleeve eagle in a rusty ochre on black was issued for use with tropical clothing.

It was in the field of camouflage clothing that the Waffen-SS played a particularly important role in the evolution of military dress. Today, practically every national army clothes at least a proportion of its combat infantry in suits of camouflage-printed material. (Indeed, since the early 1960s camouflage clothing has become such a symbol of military 'machismo' that terrorist and irregular groups tend to favour its dashing appearance even when there is no practical reason for wearing it.) There are two basic types: one, which we may term the 'chameleon', designed to blend the wearer invisibly with his surroundings, and another, of more dramatic angular shapes, designed rather with an eye to disrupting the wearer's image and breaking up his silhouette than to hide his presence completely. The SS, whose patterns were invariably printed in sequences of spots and leaf-shapes, pioneered the former approach, while the Army favoured a more angular, disruptive pattern.

It was the Waffen-SS which pioneered the issue of camouflage clothing, and smocks and helmet covers were worn from the beginning of the war, becoming general issue by the 1940 campaigns. The loose-fitting collarless smocks had a pullover neck closed by laced drawstrings. They had elasticated or drawstring waists, and elasticated or buttoned cuffs; vertical slashes in the chest gave access to tunic pockets. These slashes were often concealed by flaps with a central button. Later models had pockets in the smock itself, closed by plastic buttons. Small loops of material were sometimes sewn to the front and back of the shoulders and to the upper back, for the attachment of local foliage. The smocks were reversible, and each side was printed in a contrasting camouflage mottle for spring, summer or autumn use, or white for winter. There were some half-a-dozen different colour combinations and patterns designed to blend in with light spring greens, richer greens or dusty shades for summer, and autumnal mauve-brown and russets*. This complex system undoubtedly broke down in practice, as prompt seasonal replacement of all smocks in the course of heavy fighting over the huge distances of the Russian Front was clearly impossible.

Camouflage trousers of generous cut, drawstringed at the ankle, were also issued, but from photographic evidence it seems that no real effort was made to match the pattern of the smock and trousers issued to any individual. Trousers in classic SS spotted pattern were observed, but trousers with a large angular or serpentine pattern—possibly in Army 'water-pattern' camouflage—are also to be seen in many photos of Waffen-SS troops.

In 1944 photos begin to show a new, matched camouflage suit in a markedly spotted pattern. This had a four-pocket buttoned tunic with conventional collar, similar to the service tunic in shape. Jacket and trousers were of thin, shoddy material. It is noticeable that insignia such as sleeve eagles, and even collar patches, shoulderstraps and cufftitles were sometimes worn on this suit in defiance of orders. Normally insignia on camouflage smocks, reversible jackets and so forth were limited to a stylized rank patch system worn on the upper left arm, from early 1943 onwards. These took the form of black rectangular patches with ranking in bright green, in a sequence of horizontal bars and oakleaf shapes. An Unterscharführer wore one green bar, a Scharführer two, an Oberscharführer three, a Hauptscharführer four and a Sturmscharführer five. Officers from Untersturmführer to Hauptsturmführer wore one, two and three bars below a single pair of oakleaves. Field officers from Sturmbannführer to Oberführer wore from one to four bars below two pairs of oakleaves. From Brigadeführer to Obergruppenführer the devices were in yellow—from one to three bars surmounted by a single pair of oakleaves. In theory an Oberstgruppenführer in camouflage clothing wore a pair of yellow oakleaves over a single thick yellow bar bearing three silver pips.

The mottled camouflage material was also used for helmet covers and triangular shelter quarters. The helmet covers fixed by means of a flap of cloth which slipped under the front 'brim' of the helmet, and sprung steel hooks at the back and sides. The shelter quarter or *Zeltbahn* was a triangle of waterproof cloth which served as a poncho, windbreak, or—joined to others—a tent.

In 1943 a special mottle-camouflage one-piece coverall was produced for AFV crews, with two chest and two trouser pockets. This could be worn over or in place of black or grey vehicle uniforms. In 1944 photographs show a two-piece AFV crew suit in mottle camouflage, cut to resemble the black or grey vehicle uniform in that it had a short cross-over jacket with large lapels—though smaller than on the black or grey versions. There was also, as

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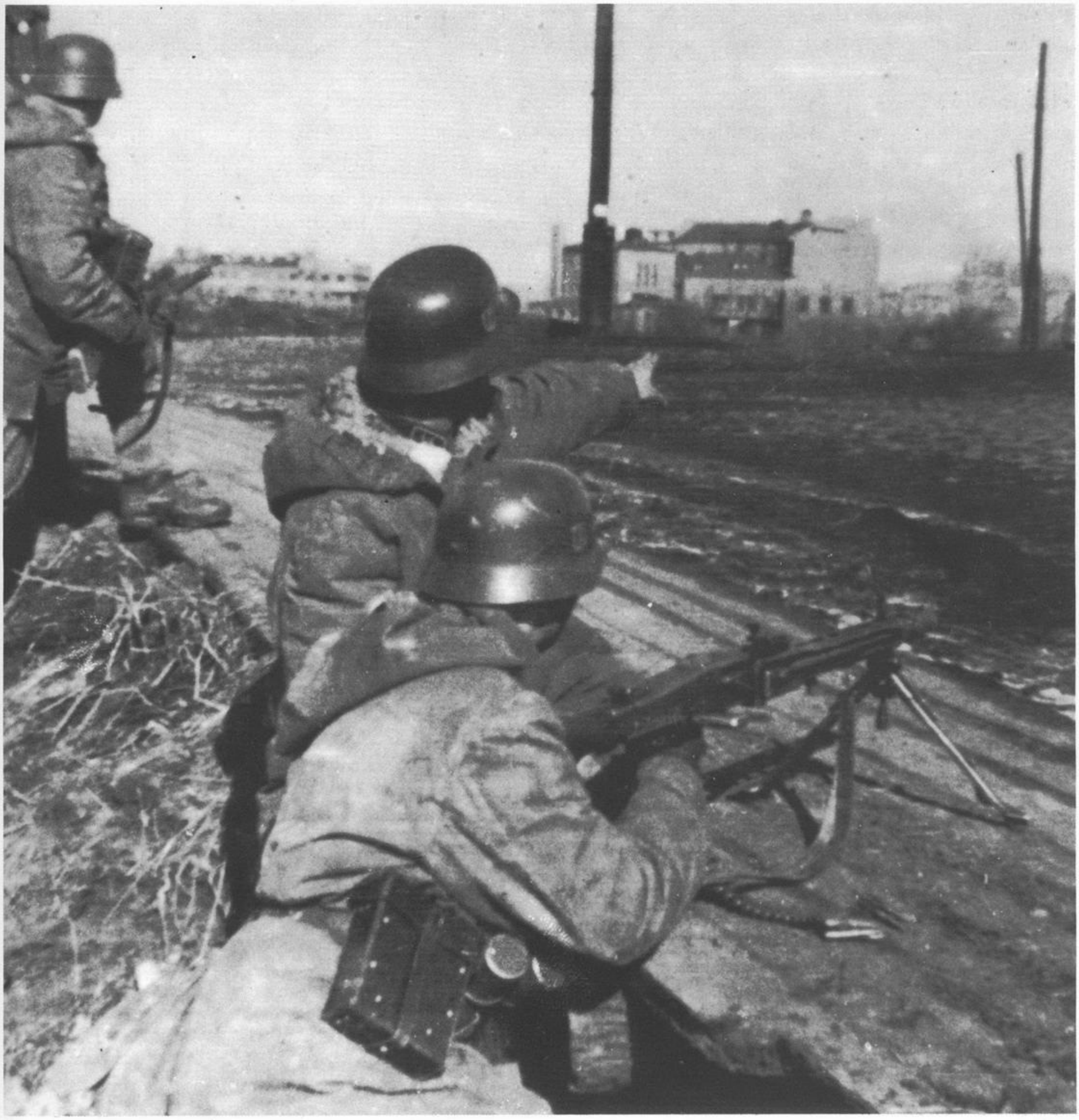
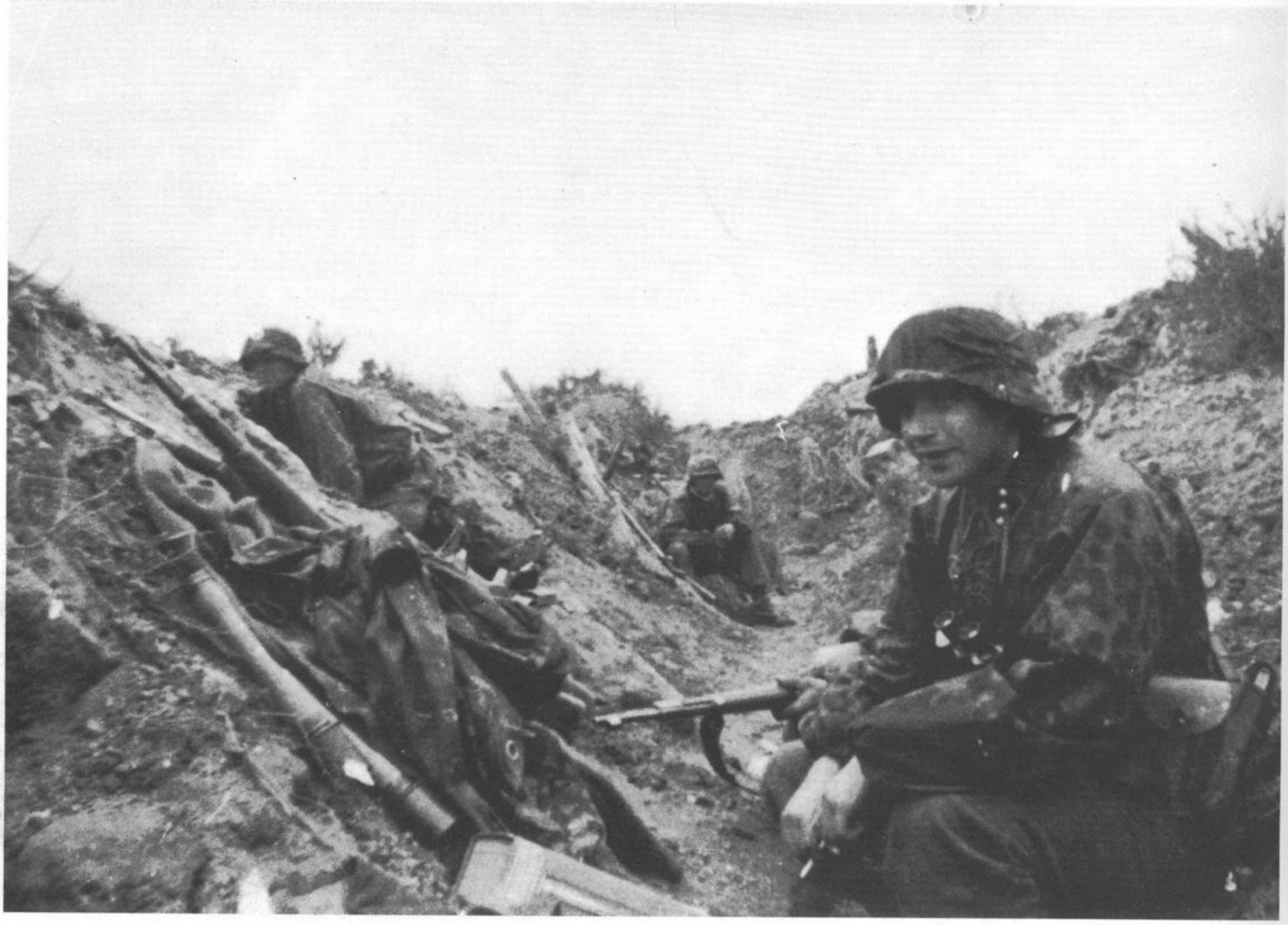
*See the colour plates; also *Vanguard 4, Fallschirmpanzerdivision 'Hermann Göring'*; and the first volume of Bender and Taylor's excellent series, quoted earlier.

mentioned, a mottle-camouflage version of the *Einheitsmütze*, which seems to have been popular with AFV crews and mountain troops.

Two points which may conclude this brief survey of Waffen-SS uniforms are the progressive replacement of long marching boots by grey webbing anklets and laced ankle boots, which began as early as 1941 and was most marked by 1944; and the use of trade and specialty badges on the forearms of the service tunic. These latter were similar in design to Army badges, but the motifs were silver-grey on a black diamond backing, instead of in *Waffenfarbe* on a disc, as was Army practice. These were worn above the cufftitle when regulations specified wear on the left sleeve.



This MG42 team, also photographed in Kharkov during the fierce fighting of early 1943, has been luckier in its clothing issue; all three wear the thigh-length grey parka and padded trousers developed specifically for the Waffen-SS and worn by them for about a year before duplication of effort between Army and SS was abandoned. Note SS-rune helmet decals still in use and the felt/leather winter boots worn by the man on the left. (Bundesarchiv 73/86/63)



An Untersturmführer and his squad take a cigarette break in a shallow trench somewhere on the steppes, amid a litter of weapons and equipment. (Bundesarchiv 73/94/16)

The Plates

A Badges and insignia

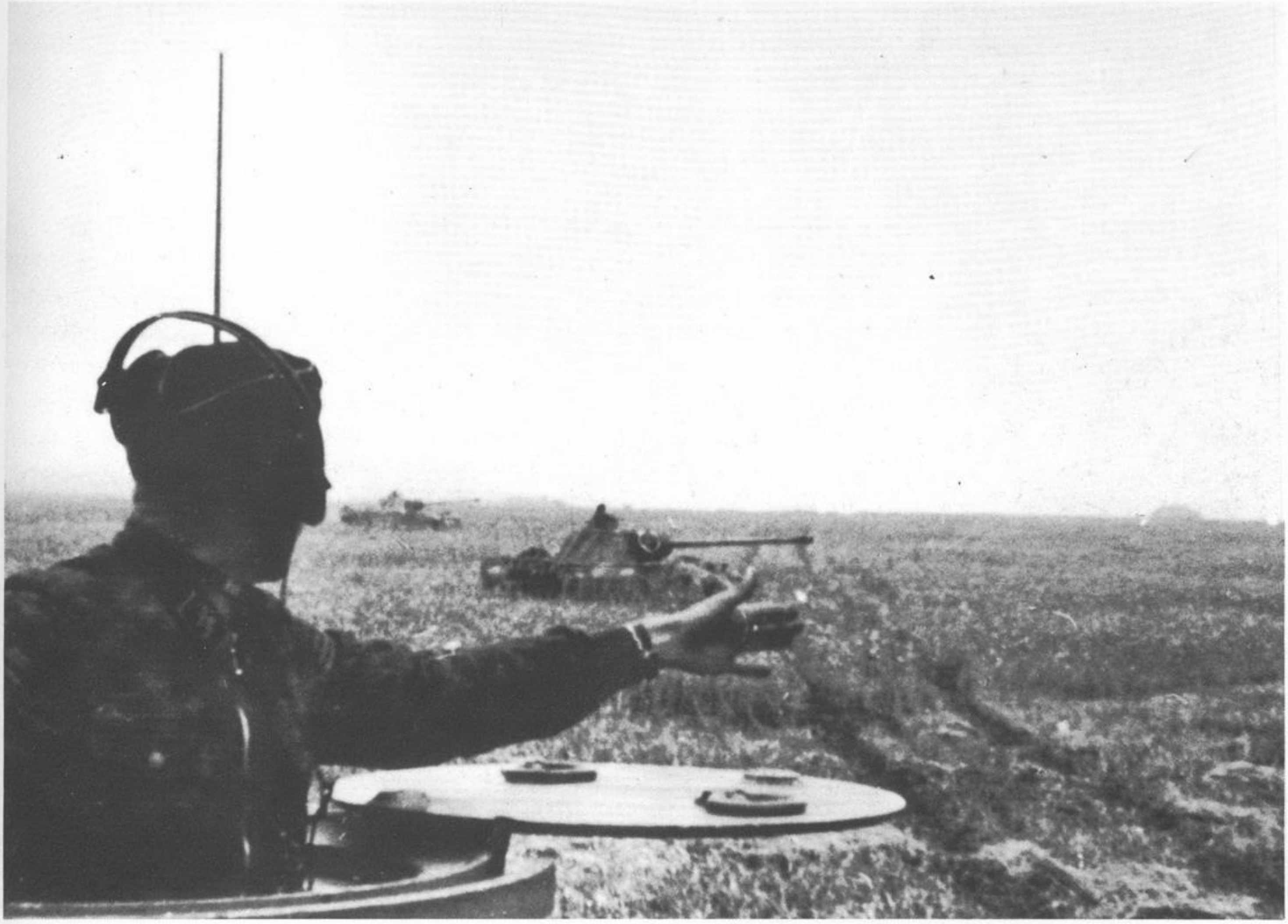
A1 SS officer's collar patch
Officer's pattern right-hand collar patch with silver cord edging and SS runes. The numeral '1' denotes the SS-VT Regiment 'Deutschland' prior to mid-1940. Personnel of the 'Germania' and 'Der Führer' Regiments wore the numerals '2' and '3'. After the French campaign, all reverted to the plain runes without numbers. Enlisted men's and NCOs' patches were plain black, without edging.

A2 Untersturmführer's collar patch
As worn on the left-hand collar: for full details of ranking, see body of text. The 'pips' were sometimes set with their edges parallel to the long edges of the patch, and sometimes, as here, on the bias.

A3 Officer's shoulderstrap
Shoulderstrap of an artillery Untersturmführer of the 'Deutschland' Regiment's support element. Note red *Waffenfarbe*, gilt officer's regimental cypher, and black secondary underlay. This strap is painted as it would appear when removed from the sewn seam at the shoulder.

A4 Rank insignia for wear on camouflage clothing
An Untersturmführer's insignia, worn on the upper left sleeve—see body of text for ranking details.

A5 'Deutschland' cufftitle
Early form of Gothic script cufftitle as worn by



'Zitadelle', the attack on the Kursk salient in July 1943, saw the introduction of the PzKw V 'Panther' tank; it was not an unqualified success, as it had been rushed to the front without adequate development. Despite the quality of this front-line snapshot, the commander of a 'Das Reich' Panther company can be seen to be wearing a camouflage suit of the type issued to armoured crews, identifiable by its breast pockets. His black sidecap, of Army Panzer cut, has silver crown piping; and rank bars in green on a black patch—apparently those of an Obersturmführer—are just visible on the upper left sleeve. (Bundesarchiv 73/96/62)

members of the 'Deutschland', 'Germania' and 'Der Führer' Regiments.

A6 Scharführer's collar patch

The system of ranking by 'pips' and bars of lace on the left-hand collar patch of NCO ranks is shown here.

A7 'Der Führer' cufftitle

Later-pattern block-lettered cufftitle, as worn by the named regiments.

A8 Brigadeführer's collar patch

The type of oakleaf insignia worn on both collar patches, in various combinations of leaves and 'pips', by ranks from Standartenführer up.

A9 'Das Reich' cufftitle

Final version of the divisional title, worn by all personnel except those entitled to retain regimental titles.

A10 SS helmet decals

The rune shield was worn on the right side, the swastika shield on the left. Both were abandoned as the war progressed, though the runes survived in general use longer than the more visible swastika shield.

A11 SS national eagle

As worn in various qualities and sizes as the upper cap insignia and on the upper left sleeve. Apart from silver and silver-grey versions, there was a dull ochre-on-black version for use on tropical clothing.

A12 SS belt buckle

The standard pattern worn by NCOs and enlisted men.

A13 'Das Reich' vehicle insignia

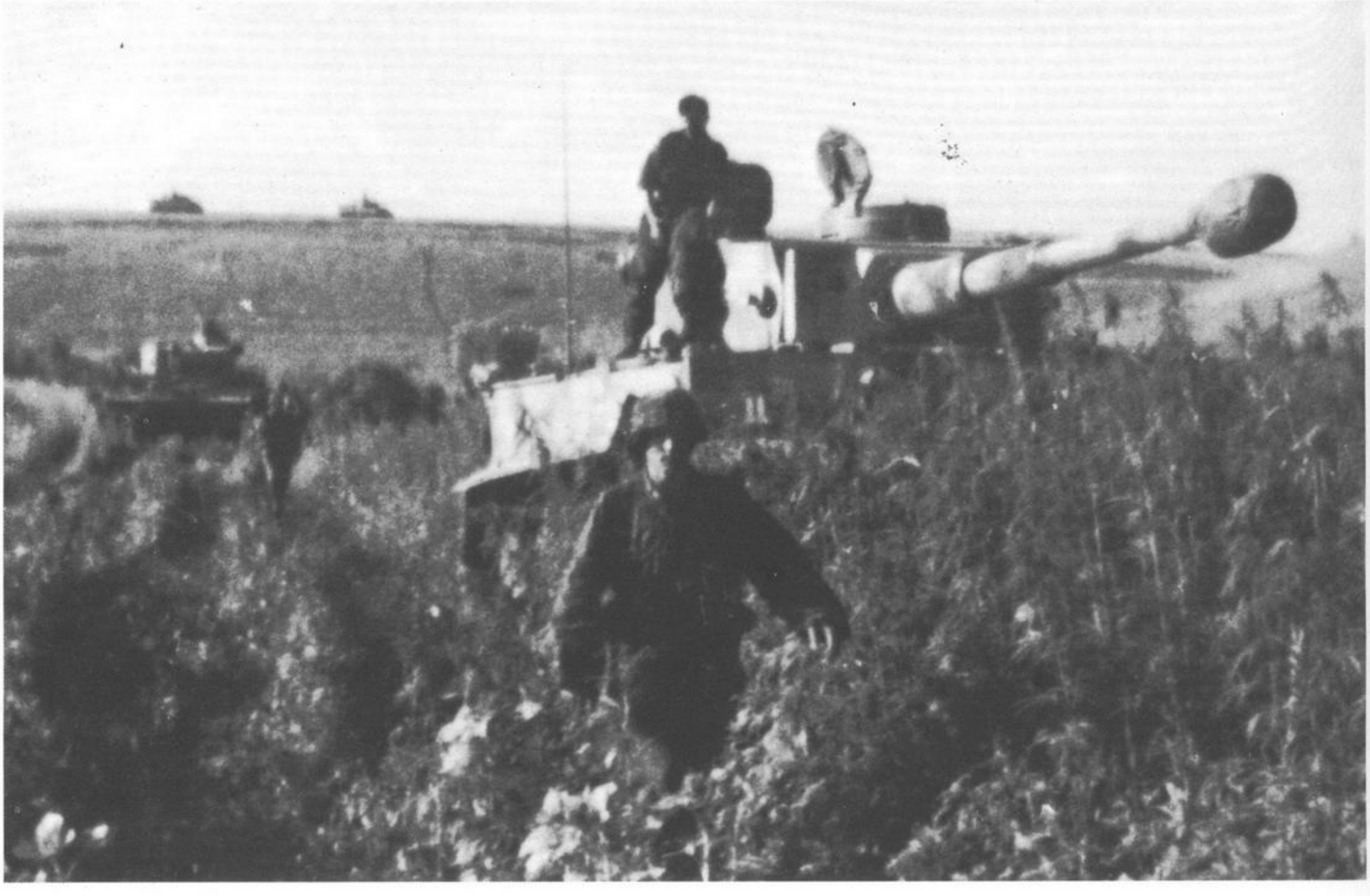
This device, in black, yellow or white, appeared on the majority of the division's vehicles from at least 1941. An alternative symbol, as illustrated on the Tiger tank on the cover, has been variously explained—as a deliberately false insignia used for security purposes, as a later variant of the device illustrated here, as the insignia of II SS Panzer Korps and, most commonly, as a special identifying device for Operation '*Zitadelle*'. The latter assumption is almost certainly incorrect, since photographic evidence which has come into the author's possession since this book was first written clearly shows the device on tanks in early spring 1943, during the Kharkov operation.

A14 Totenkopf insignia

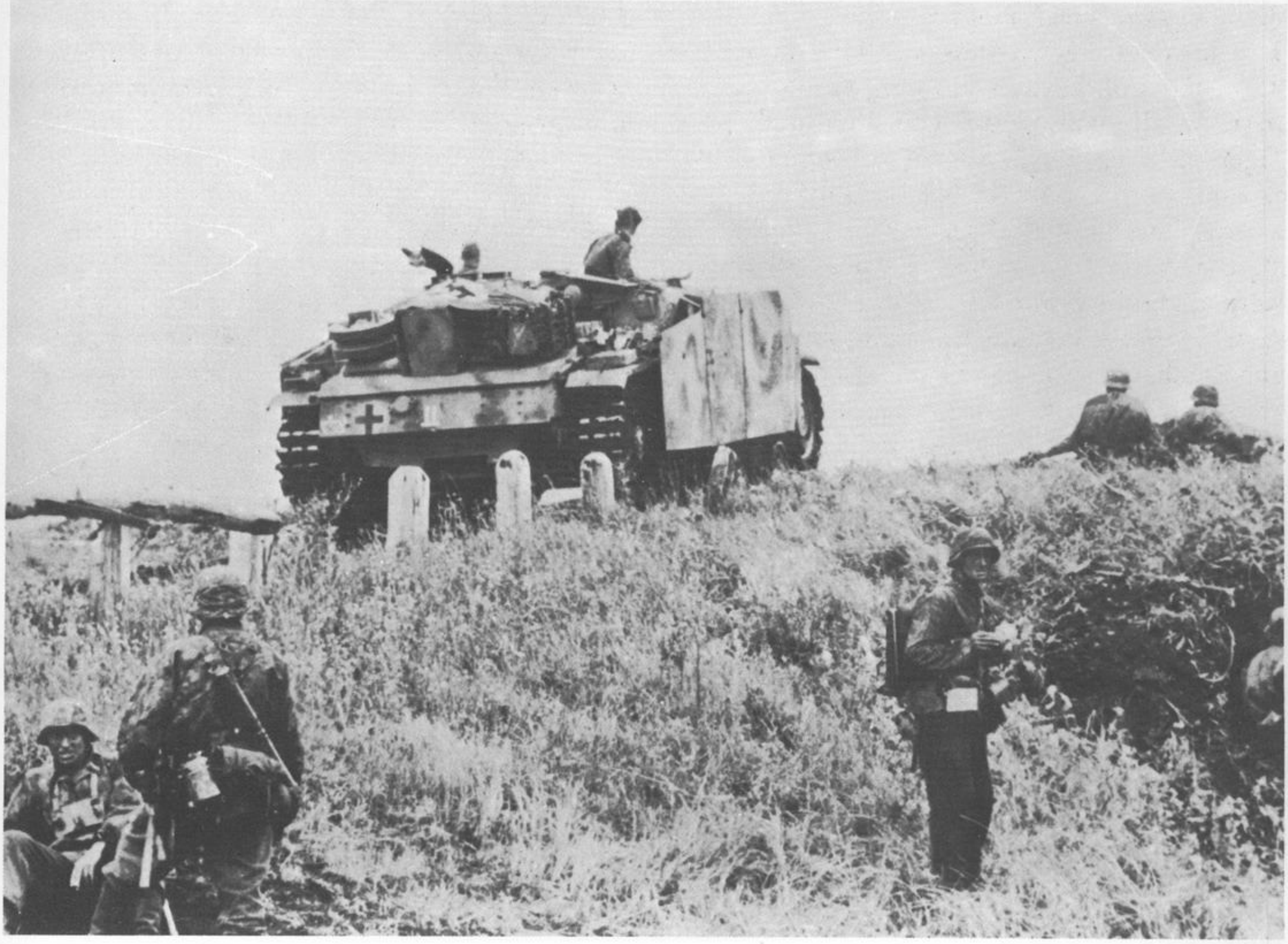
Worn on the lower front of the caps of all SS personnel, either in white metal, as here, or woven in silver-grey on black.

B Reconnaissance unit, Russia, July 1941

Men and vehicles of the 'Der Führer' Regiment during the initial stage of the advance on Smolensk, on the road through a wrecked Russian village. Some wear the camouflage smock and helmet cover which were issued to SS troops as early as 1940, over standard Army-style field grey uniforms with dark green collars. SS collar, shoulder, and sleeve insignia are worn on this uniform. The predominant weapon is the Mauser Kar 98k rifle, and the Sturmann on the right carries an MP40 submachine gun. The infantry wear the normal light combat equipment—black leather belt and Y-straps with ammunition pouches, bayonet, entrenching tool, gasmask canister, bread bag, canteen, and, in some cases, the rolled smock. The leading vehicle is a Zündapp KS750 motorcycle combination with mounted MG34 machine gun, and bears the tactical device of a motorcycle recce



PzKw VI 'Tiger I' heavy tanks of SS Panzer Abteilung 502, serving with the 'Das Reich' Division, move up for the Kursk offensive. Despite the fuzzy quality of the picture, the disputed insignia illustrated on our front cover is clearly marked on the front plate of the nearest tank outboard of the MG mounting. The crewman riding outside wears the black sidecap and one-piece armoured crews' camouflage overall. Photos which have appeared elsewhere show that tanks of this unit bore turret numbers in the sequence 'S03', 'S11', etc.—the 'S' indicating 'Schwere' or 'heavy'. (Bundesarchiv 73/80/46)

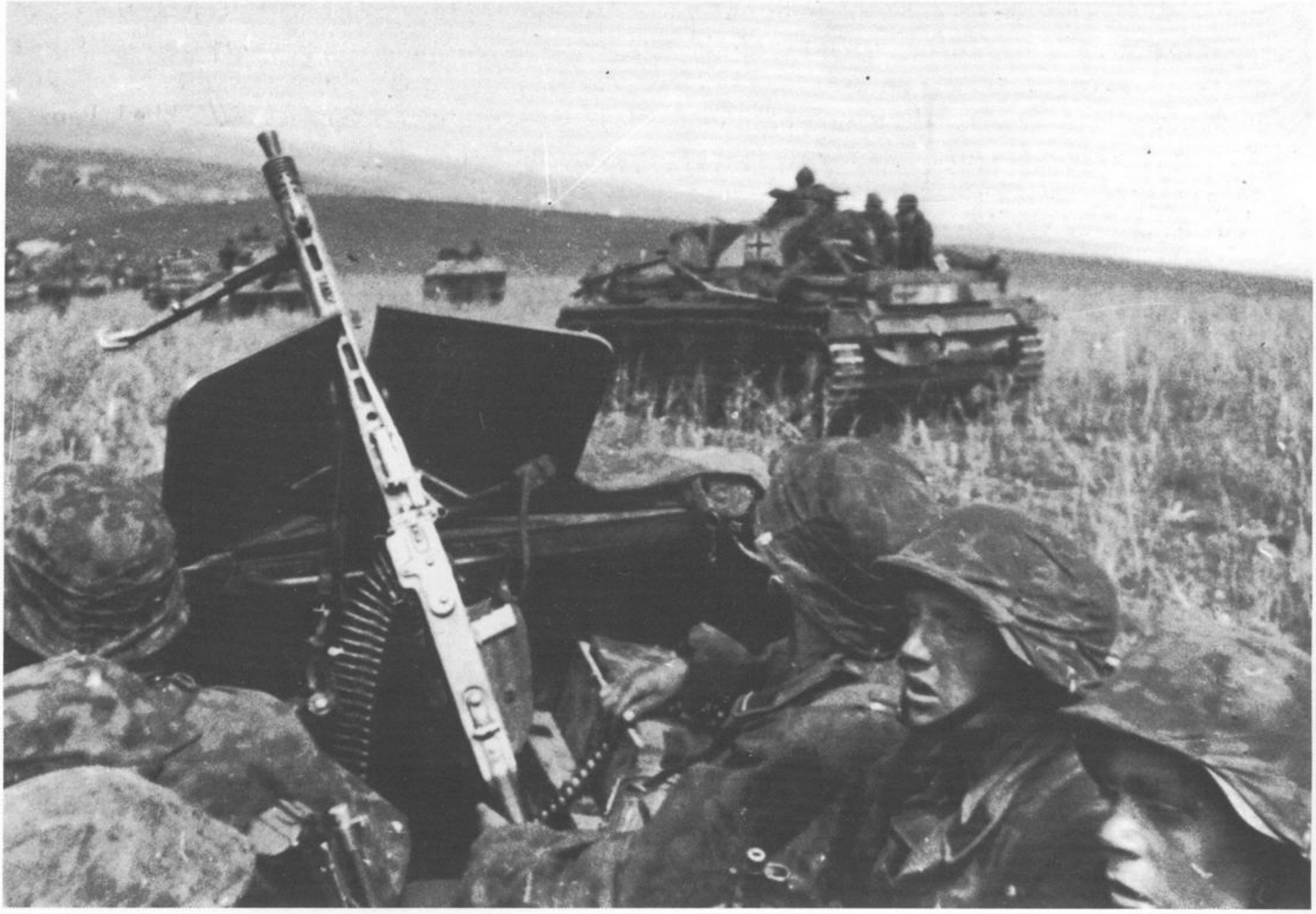


Released by the censor on 9 September 1943, and therefore almost certainly taken during the July fighting at Kursk, this photo shows a StuG III self-propelled assault gun with the disputed SS armoured formation marking on the rear hull to the right of the cross; it may well be a vehicle of the 'Das Reich' Division. A national flag is draped over the stowage on the rear deck as an aircraft recognition sign.

unit. Following it is an early StuG III assault gun, with the short 7.5cm L/24 gun (SdKfz 142); note the 'Reich' divisional device on both vehicles, and the white 'G' of Panzer Gruppe Guderian on the StuG III—markings are taken from a contemporary photograph which appears elsewhere in this book, and which also confirms that at this date StuG crews wore the black Panzer uniform with, presumably, red artillery *Waffenfarbe* on the shoulderstraps.

C Officers' conference before Kharkov, February 1943

Three officers of SS 'Das Reich' discuss the situation during the Soviet offensive of early 1943, their deliberations recorded for the 'Home Front' by a cameraman from the SS war correspondents unit—the 'Kurt Eggers' Regiment. In the background is a troop of PzKw IV tanks in rough whitewash camouflage, displaying the normal company-troop-tank turret code numbers, and the divisional sign on a patch of the original grey paintwork left unwhitened by the driver's visor. The left-hand officer of the group wears the popular private-purchase leather greatcoat, his shoulderstraps denoting the rank of Oberführer. He also wears a fur cap complete with eagle and *Totenkopf* badges. Next to him is an Obersturmführer wearing the SS version of the reversible white/camouflage winter combat uniform, with a whitewashed helmet and captured Russian felt boots. His sleeve bears the rank patch officially limited to patterned camouflage garments. On the right of the group is a Sturmbannführer wearing a sheepskin overcoat—either Russian, or privately



Battle fatigue shows in the faces of these 'Das Reich' Panzer-Grenadiers at Kursk, who appear to be mounted in an SdKfz 251 armoured half-track personnel carrier; a PzKw III is in the background. (Bundesarchiv 73/80/38)

purchased—and the 'old style officer's service cap', with cloth-covered peak and without cords. It is piped in white infantry *Waffenfarbe*. On the far left a motorcycle despatch rider approaches, wearing the grey rubberized fabric coat issued to such troops; and on the far right the war correspondent displays a common combination of garments for the Russian winter—a white camouflage smock worn over the standard field-grey greatcoat.

D Panzer-Grenadiers and Panther tank, Normandy, July 1944

A group of infantry from one of the Panzer-Grenadier regiments of the 'Das Reich' Division rest briefly during the bitter fighting around St Lô, with a PzKw V Panther Ausf. A tank for company. The infantrymen wear mis-matched combinations of camouflage smocks and trousers in two variations of the SS summer camouflage pattern, or the newly issued four-pocket camouflage tunic and trousers in its distinctive pattern, with camouflage helmet covers. Weapons include the MG42 machine gun, the MP40 sub-machine gun, the Kar 98k rifle, and grenades. By this stage of the war it was not unusual for the black SS and rank patches to be removed from the collars of the tunic in the front line—the tunic itself was now more often than not the all-grey 1943 economy version, with unpleated pockets.

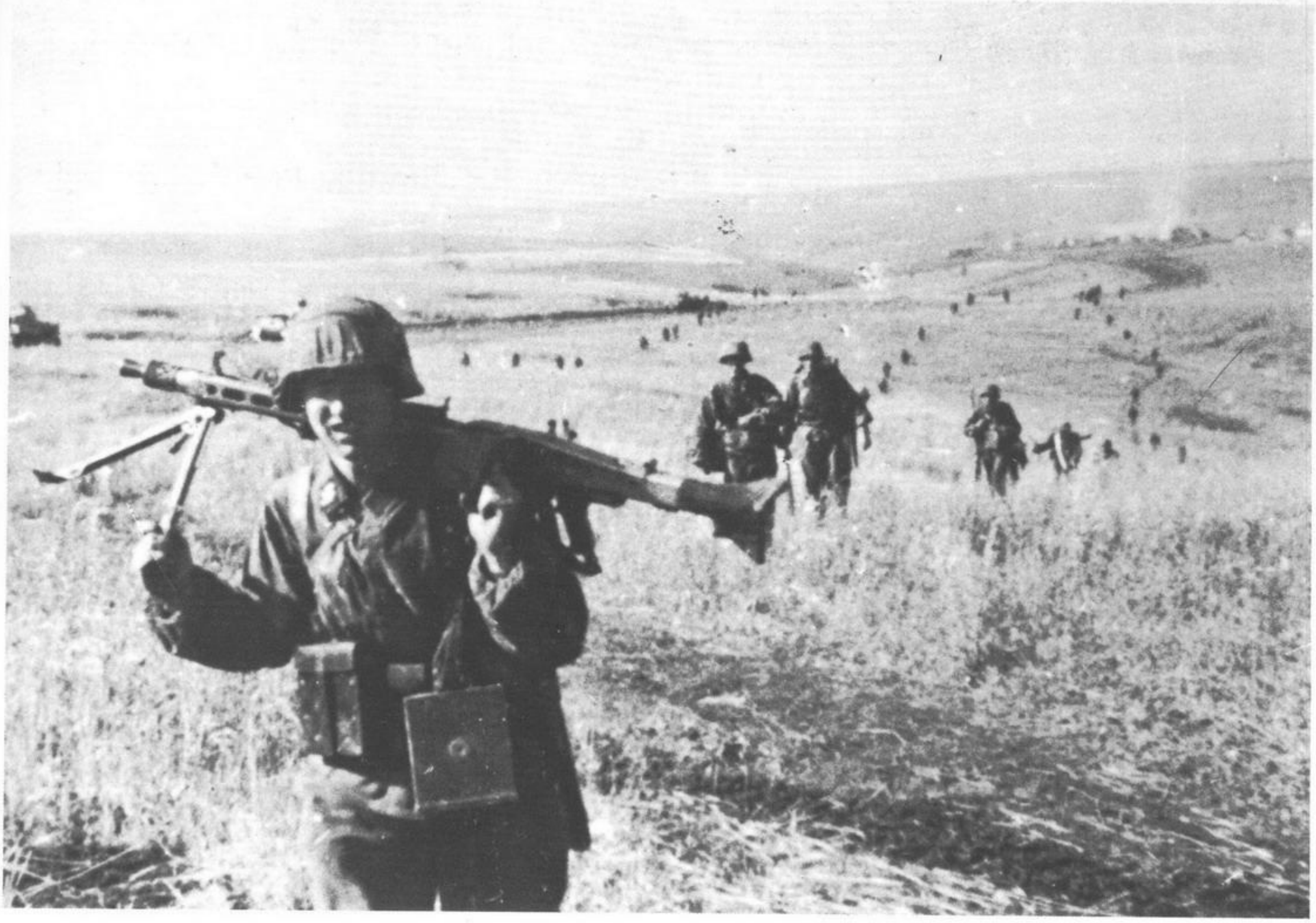
The Panther Ausf. A was the second production version and the most common in Normandy; it featured a ball-mounted machine gun in the glacis plate, and a new commander's cupola with armoured periscopes. Spare track links were often applied to upper rear hull sides and turret, for extra protection. All German tanks of this period were finished in a dull ochre yellow paint scheme, often applied at factory stage over Zimmerit anti-magnetic mine plaster, with its characteristic rippled finish. Dark green and dark red-brown camouflage paints were issued to the unit, and applied in streaky patterns over the basic finish by the crews themselves. The shade depended on the degree of dilution, and the pattern upon taste, junior commander's whim, and method of application. Markings were kept to a minimum; it is rare to see a divisional sign on a Panther of this period, and turret numbers were often painted in a small and subdued style, or left off altogether.

On the turret, using his commander's headset and throat-mike, is a crewman. He wears the version of the Panzer uniform which was issued in SS pattern camouflage cloth and widely worn by vehicle crews in 1943–45; it was similar in cut to the black uniform, though the collar was of less generous cut. A camouflage version of the M1943 *Einheitsfeldmütze* was also issued, and seems from photos to have been particularly popular with tank and mountain troops. Officially the camouflage clothing was to be bare of insignia except for the stylized left sleeve patch, but this order was widely ignored; shoulderstraps, sleeve eagles, even cufftitles and collar patches were added to it, depending on the tolerance of junior commanders.

On the right is the tank commander, an Obersturmführer, wearing normal SS officer's collar patches and shoulderstraps with Panzer pink *Waffenfarbe* on the SS version of the black Panzer vehicle uniform—it differed from Army issue in having a smaller and more rounded collar, piped in silver for officers. The single-button version of the black M1943 Panzer troops' *Einheitsfeldmütze* is worn with SS eagle and *Totenkopf* badges; an officer's version piped in silver round the crown seam was available, but photos show that the distinction was not rigidly observed.

E The Ardennes, December 1944

During their advance in the area of St Vith, two NCOs of the 'Das Reich' Division compare their maps. On the left is a Hauptscharführer serving with a 15cm Nebelwerfer detachment. He wears a



An MG42 gunner leads a long line of 'Das Reich' infantry across the endless steppes during the summer 1943 battles. From this time onward, 'Das Reich' would march in dogged retreat rather than in heady advance. (Bundesarchiv 73/80/54) whitewashed helmet, and—a rare sight at this stage of the war—a fully badged greatcoat bearing collar patches, shoulderstraps with the Bordeaux-red *Waffenfarbe* of the Nebelwerfer units, sleeve eagle and cufftitle. In the background a Nebelwerfer crewman wears a white camouflage smock over his greatcoat. From 1943 onwards there was a progressive replacement of the long leather marching boots with ankle boots and grey webbing anklets on the British model. He carries an MP43/44. On the right is an Oberscharführer, perhaps the commander of a Jagdpanzer IV of the Division's anti-tank battalion. He wears a battered and 'operational' example of the NCO's *Schirmmütze* service cap, with leather chinstrap and peak, and the pink piping of tank and anti-tank troops. His hooded, padded, reversible winter combat jacket is worn with the white side innermost; apart from the camouflage pattern this was identical to Army issue. There seems to have been little matching of patterns between camouflage smocks and jackets and camouflage trousers in the Waffen-SS, with the exception of the four-pocket uniform. On the left sleeves is the stylized rank patch, the only insignia worn.

Notes sur les planches en couleur

A Insignes (1) Insigne de col d'un officier du Régiment 'Deutschland' avant l'été 1940, porté sur le côté droit. (2) Insigne d'Untersturmführer, porté sur le côté gauche du col. (3) Epaulette d'Untersturmführer d'artillerie, du Régiment 'Deutschland'. (4) Insigne de manche gauche d'Untersturmführer, utilisé sur les vêtements de camouflage. (5) Brassard du type porté au début de la guerre, l'inscription étant en caractères gothiques. (6) Insigne de Scharführer. (7) Brassard du type porté à la fin de la guerre, l'inscription étant en caractères d'imprimerie. (8) Insigne de Brigadeführer, porté sur le côté gauche du col. (9) Brassard du type porté à la fin de la guerre par tout le personnel divisionnaire n'ayant pas droit au brassard régimentaire. (10) Ecusson de casque des SS, abandonné vers le milieu de la guerre. (11) Insigne représentant l'aigle des SS, porté comme partie supérieure de l'insigne de casquette et sur le haut du bras gauche. (12) Boucle de ceinture des soldats et sous-officiers des SS. (13) Insigne de véhicule de la division 'Das Reich', qui était peint sur la plupart des véhicules à partir de 1941. L'autre devise, illustrée sur le char Tigre qui figure sur la couverture, a été interprétée de diverses manières, mais sa signification n'a pas été établie. (14) Tête de mort portée comme insigne de casquette inférieur, en tissu ou en métal, par toutes les troupes des Waffen-SS.

B Russie, juillet 1941 Les soldats du régiment 'Der Führer' s'avançant vers Smolensk. Ils portent la tenue-type de l'armée avec les insignes des SS et certains d'entre eux portent une blouse de camouflage et une capuche pour couvrir leur casque. Le motocycle avec sidecar d'une unité de reconnaissance porte l'insigne divisionnaire ainsi qu'un insigne tactique indiquant le type d'unité; ce motocycle est un Zündapp KS750. Le canon d'assaut automoteur est d'un modèle utilisé plus tôt dans la guerre; il porte l'insigne de la division et celui de la Panzergruppe Guderian. Certaines photographies montrent qu'à cette date les équipages des canons d'assaut automoteurs dans la division portaient l'uniforme noir des Panzers.

C Kharkov, février 1943 Trois officiers—un Oberführer (à gauche), un Obersturmführer (centre) et un Sturmbannführer (à droite) posent pour un caméraman correspondant de guerre. Ils portent, respectivement, une casquette en fourrure et un manteau en cuir acheté dans le commerce; l'uniforme de combat d'hiver réversible, matelassé, le côté blanc à l'extérieur; et un manteau en mouton retourné, acheté dans le commerce, avec la 'casquette d'officier ancienne modèle'. A l'extrême gauche se trouve une estafette motocycliste portant un manteau en toile caoutchoutée. Le caméraman porte une blouse blanche de camouflage par dessus le manteau gris des troupes allemandes. Les chars PzKw IVF à l'arrière-plan portent l'insigne divisionnaire qui est peint à l'avant du véhicule.

D Normandie, 1944 Un groupe d'infanterie, portant le mélange typique de différentes versions de la tenue de camouflage des SS, photographié avec un Obersturmführer du régiment de chars de la division et un char Panthère. L'officier du char porte le type d'Einheitsfeldmütze noire de 1943 normalement portée par un simple soldat. Le membre de l'équipage du char qui se tient debout sur le char porte l'uniforme d'un soldat de char, en tissu de camouflage au lieu du drap noir normal, et la casquette de 1943.

E Les Ardennes, 1944–45 A gauche, un Hauptscharführer du détachement Nebelwerfer de la division, portant un manteau militaire à col vert foncé, l'insigne de col, les épaulettes gansées de rouge-bordeaux indiquant sa branch, l'insigne d'un aigle sur la manche, et le brassard; on aurait rarement vu un uniforme aussi complet à ce stade de la guerre. L'autre sous-officier est un Oberscharführer d'une unité antichars, vêtu de la combinaison ouatée d'assaut portée en hiver, le côté camouflé à l'extérieur, et la 'casquette d'officier ancienne modèle'.

Farbtafeln

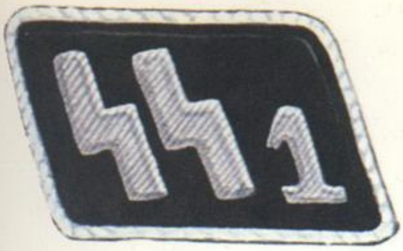
A Insignien (1) Kragenspiegel eines Offiziers der 'Deutschlandstandarte' bevor Mitte-1940: dieser Kragenspiegel wurde an der rechten Seite getragen. (2) Linker Kragenspiegel eines Untersturmführers. (3) Schulterklappe eines Untersturmführers der Artillerie, 'Deutschlandstandarte'. (4) Linker Ärmeltuchstreifen eines Untersturmführer, auf Tarnkleidung verwendbar. (5) Ärmelstreifen früheren Musters mit gotischen Buchstaben. (6) Linker Kragenspiegel eines Scharführers. (7) Regimentsärmelstreifen späteren Musters mit Blockbuchstaben. (8) Linker Kragenspiegel eines Brigadeführers. (9) Ärmelstreifen späteren Musters von allen Divisionspersonal, die zu keinem Regimentsärmelstreifen berechtigt waren getragen. (10) SS-Helm-schild, bis die Mittelkriegsjahre ausgefallen. (11) SS-Adlerabzeichen, als Oberteil des Mützenabzeichens und am linken Oberarm getragen. (12) Gürtelschnalle der SS Mannschaften und Unteroffizier. (13) 'Das Reich' Divisionsabzeichen für Kraftfahrzeuge, ab 1941 auf den meisten Fahrzeugen angestrichen. Das andere, auf dem Tigerpanzer am vorderen Buchdeckel geschilderte Sinnbild ist verschiedenerweise erkannt worden, jedoch ohne seine Bestimmte Bedeutung feststellen zu können. (14) Totenkopfabzeichen als unterer Teil des Mutzenabzeichens, aus Stoff oder Metall, von allen Waffen SS Mannschaften getragen.

B Russland, Juli 1941 Truppen der 'Führerstandarte' dringen auf Smolensk vor. Sie tragen Uniformen militärischer Art mit SS-Abzeichen und etliche sind mit Tarnüberkleidern und Helmüberzügen versehen. Das einer Aufklärungseinheit gehörende Motorrad und Beiwagen trägt Divisionsabzeichen sowohl als takische Insignien wodurch die Einheitsgattung festgestellt werden konnte; diese Maschine isteine Zündapp KS750. Die StuG III Sturmgeschütze auf selbstfahrender Lafette ist früherer Ausführung; sie trägt Abzeichen, die auf die Division und auf die Panzergruppe Guderian deuten. Aus Photos von dieser Zeit sieht man, dass die Mannschaften der selbstfahrenden Sturmgeschütze die Schwarze Panzeruniform trugen.

C Kharkov, Februar 1943 Drei Offiziere—Oberführer (links), Obersturmführer (mitte) und Sturmbannführer (rechts) stellen sich für die Aufnahme eines Kriegs-berichterstatters in Pose. Sie tragen, beziehungsweise, Pelzmütze mit privatgekauften Ledermantel; die wendbare, wattierte Winterfelduniform mit der weissen Seite nach aussen; und einen privatgekauften Schaffellmantel mit 'Offizersfeldmütze alter Art'. Ganz links sieht man einen Motorradmeldefahrer, der einen mit Gummi imprägnierten Anzug trägt. Der Kameramann trägt über einem feldgrauen Wintermantel einen weissen Tarnüberkleid. Die PzKw IVF Panzer im Hintergrund zeigen vorne angestrichene Divisionsabzeichen.

D Normandie, 1944 Eine Gruppe Infanteristen, die eine typische Mischung von verschiendenen Ausführungengen der SS Tarnbekleidung darstellen, zusammen mit einem Obersturmführer undeinem Pantherpanzer. Der Panzeroffizier trägt die schwarze Einheitsfeldmütze (1943) in der Mannschaftenausführung. Der auf dem Panzer stehende Panzermannschaftsmitglied trägt die aus Tarnstoff hergestellte Ausführung der schwarzen Panzeruniform und die 1943 Mütze.

E Die Ardennen, 1944–45 Links ein Hauptscharführer der Divisionsnebelwerferabteilung trägt einen Vorschriftswintermantel, zusammen mit dunkelgrümen Kragen, Kragenspiegel, Schulterklappen mit der burgunderroten Waffenfarbe, Adlerabzeichen auf dem Ärmel und Ärmelstreifen. Es käme selten vor, dass solche vollständige Uniform zu dieser Kriegsperiode zu sehen war. Der andere Unteroffizier ist ein Oberscharführer einer Panzerjägereinheit, der die wattierte Winterfelduniform mit Tarnseite nach aussen trägt und die 'Offiziersfeldmütze alter Art'.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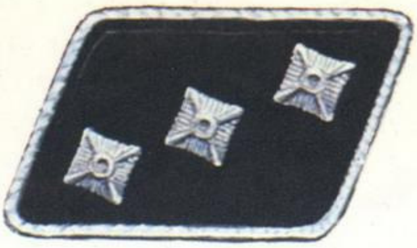
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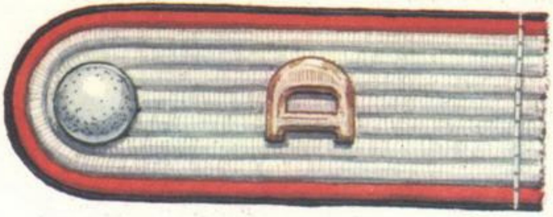
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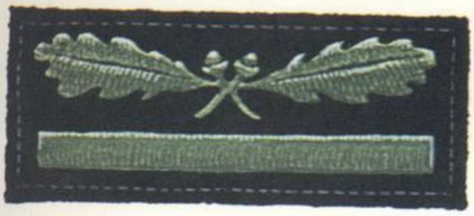
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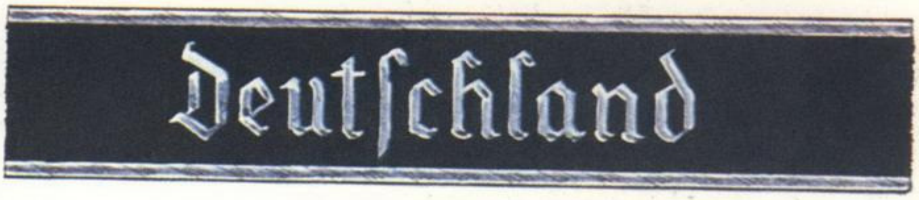
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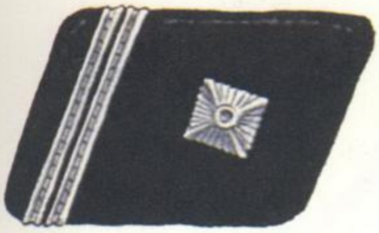
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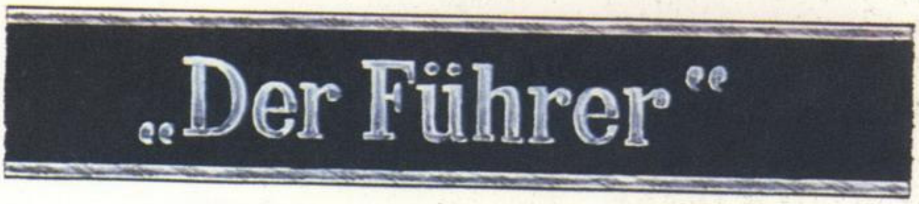

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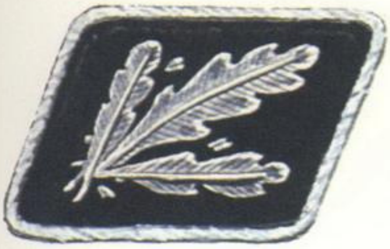
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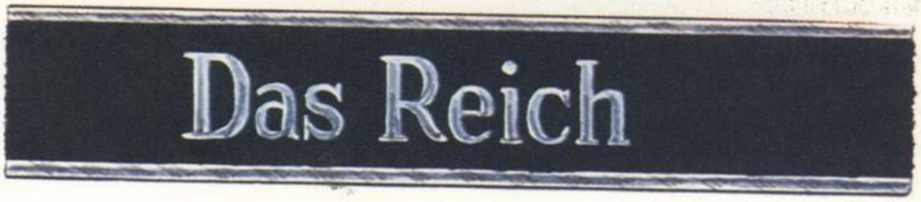

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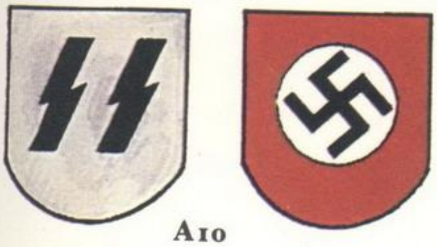
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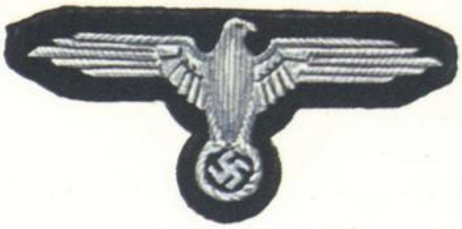
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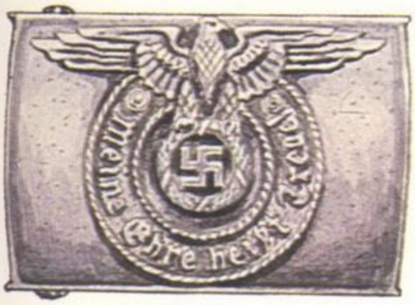
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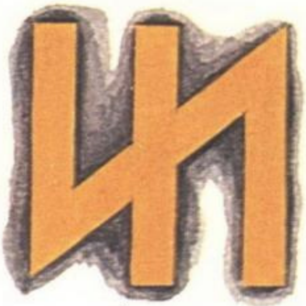
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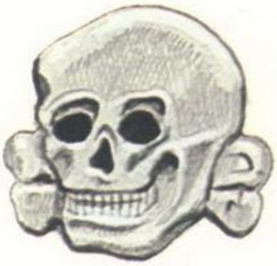
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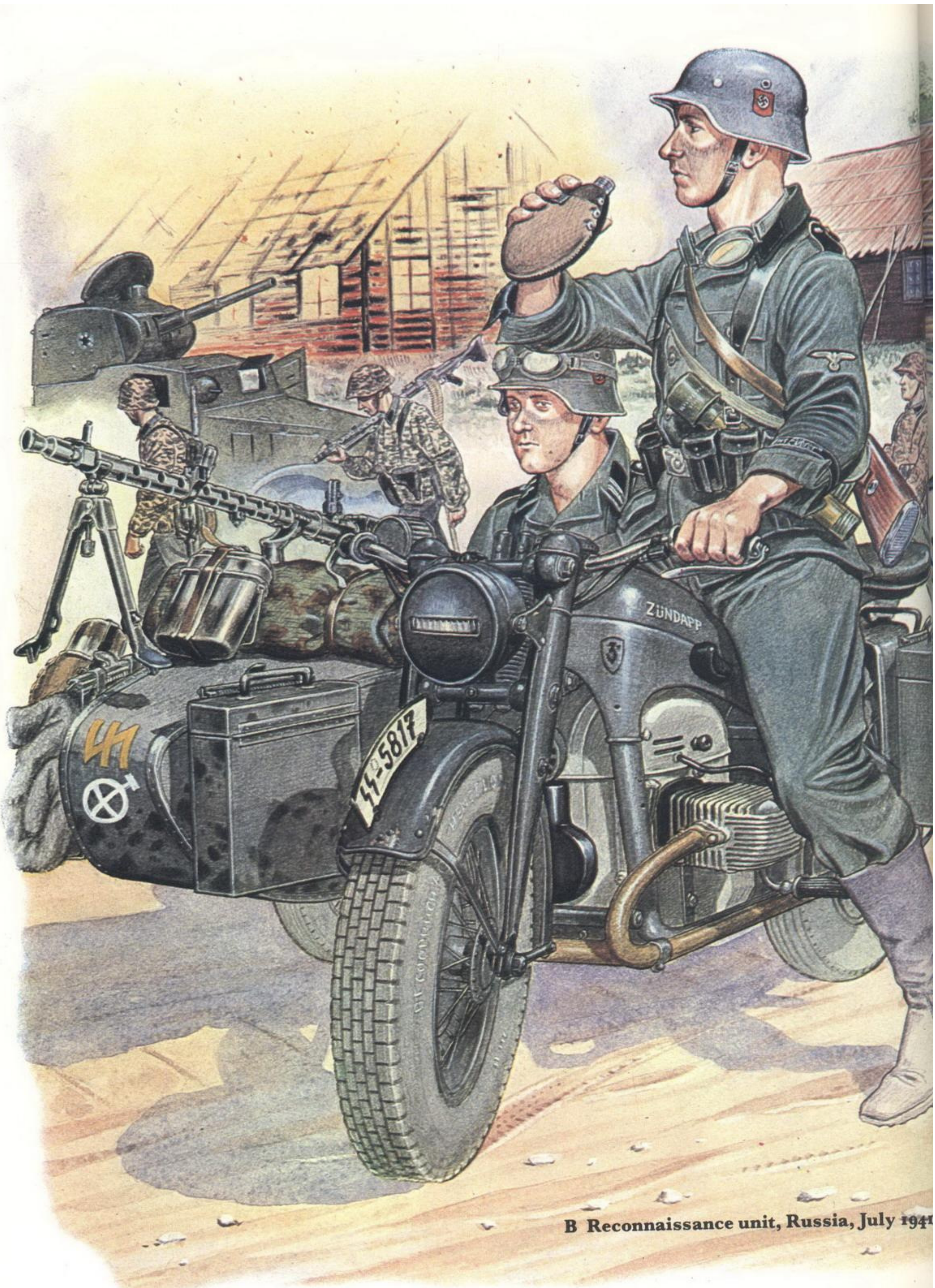
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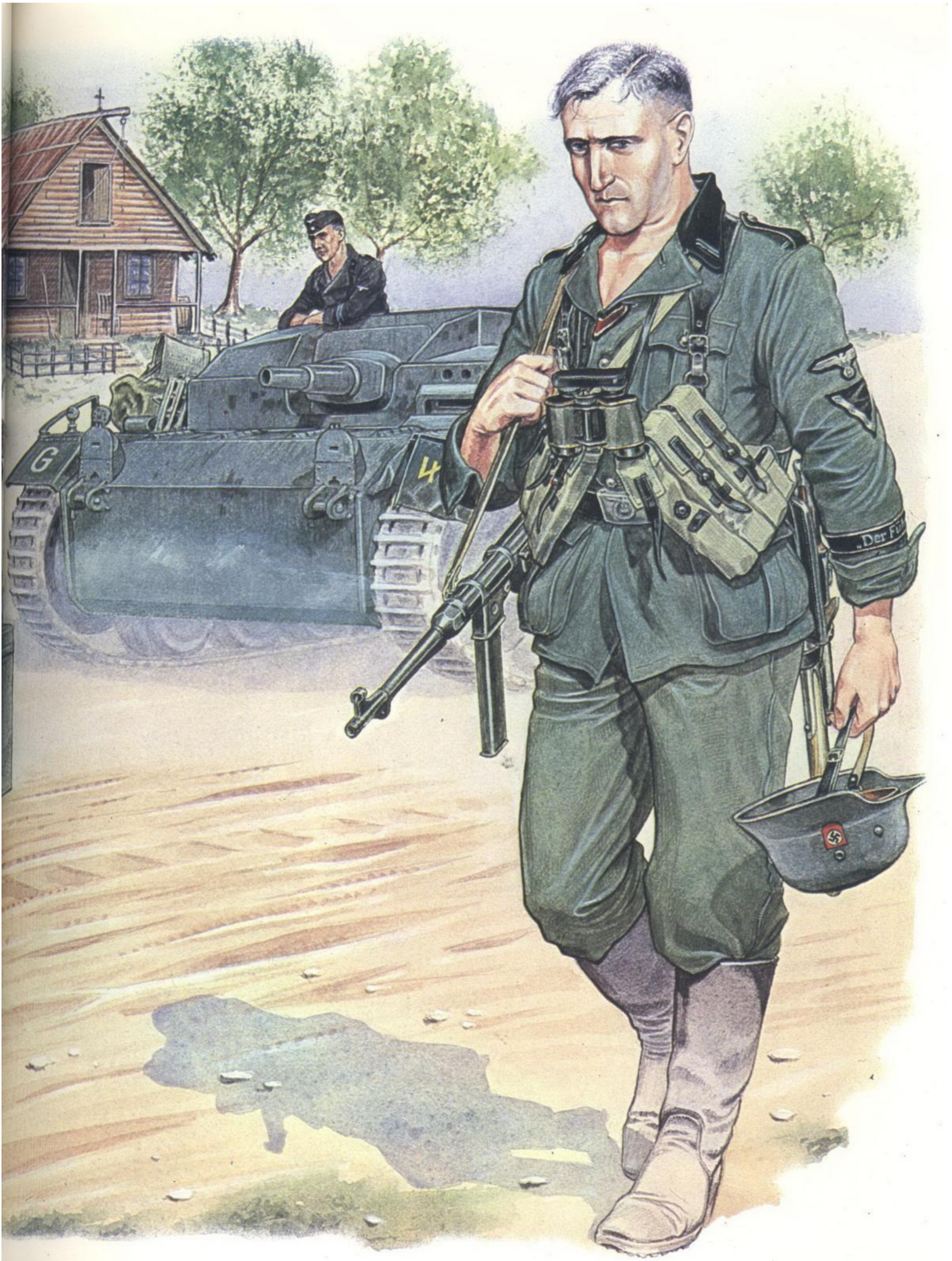
B Reconnaissance unit, Russia, July 1941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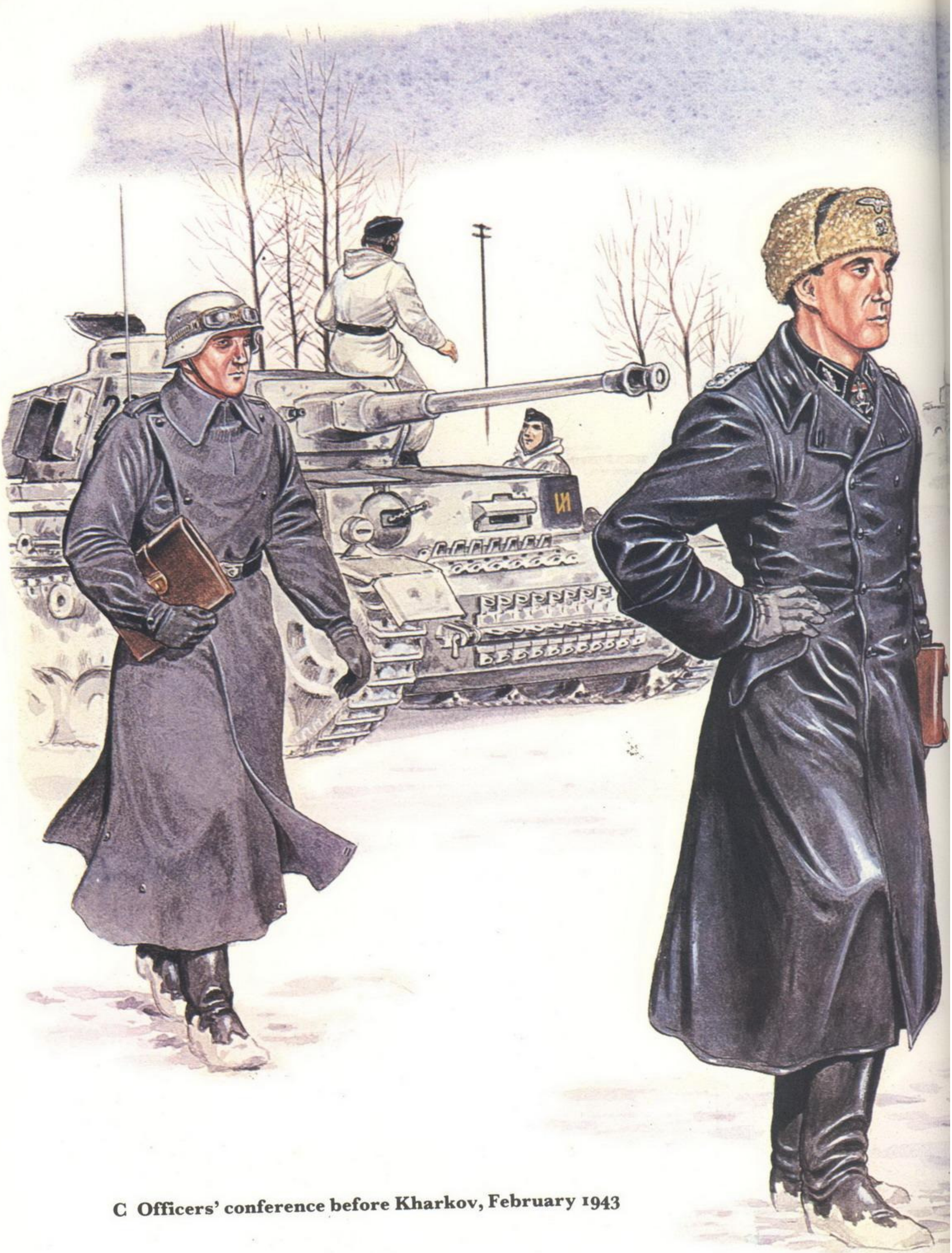
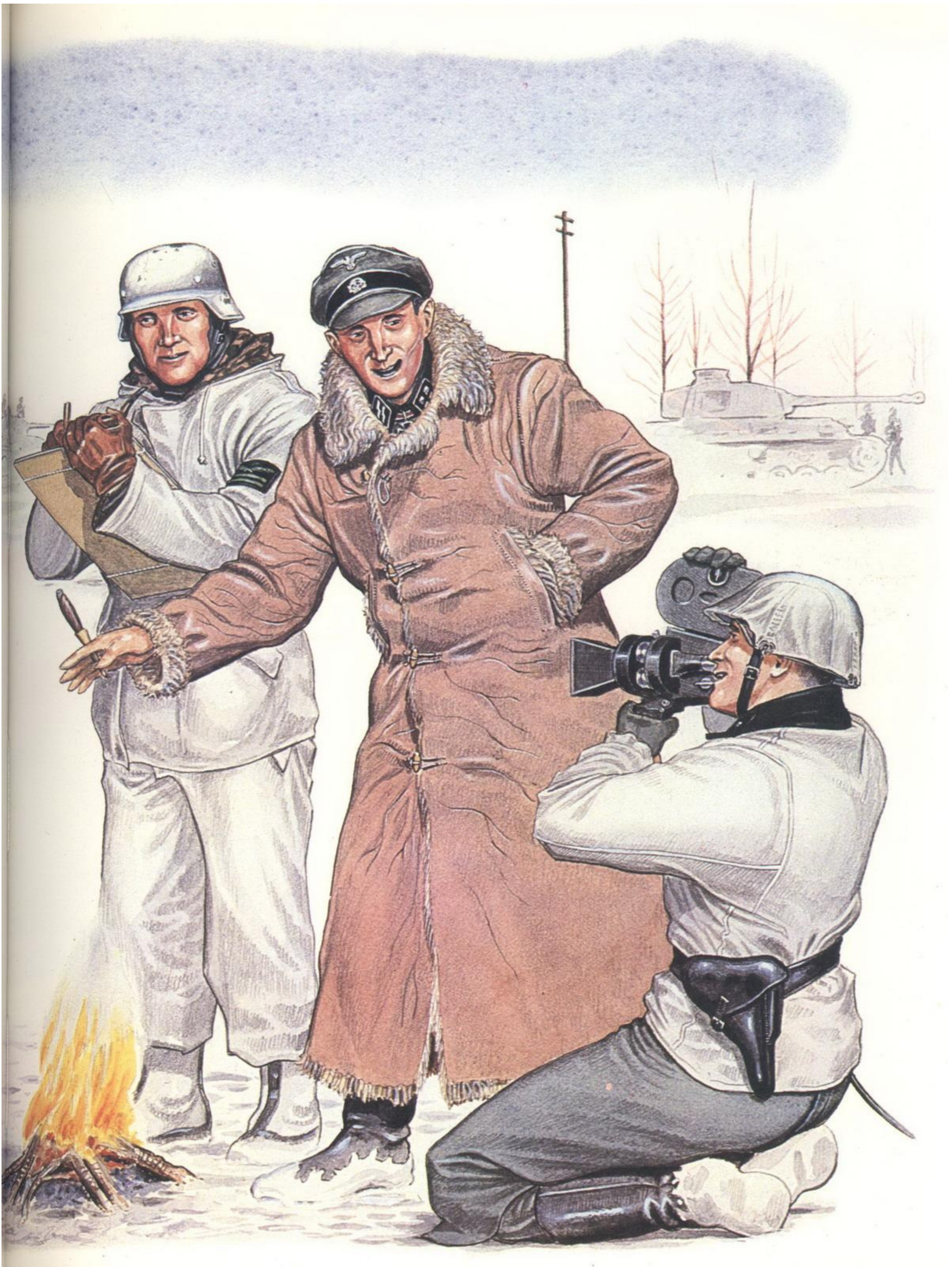
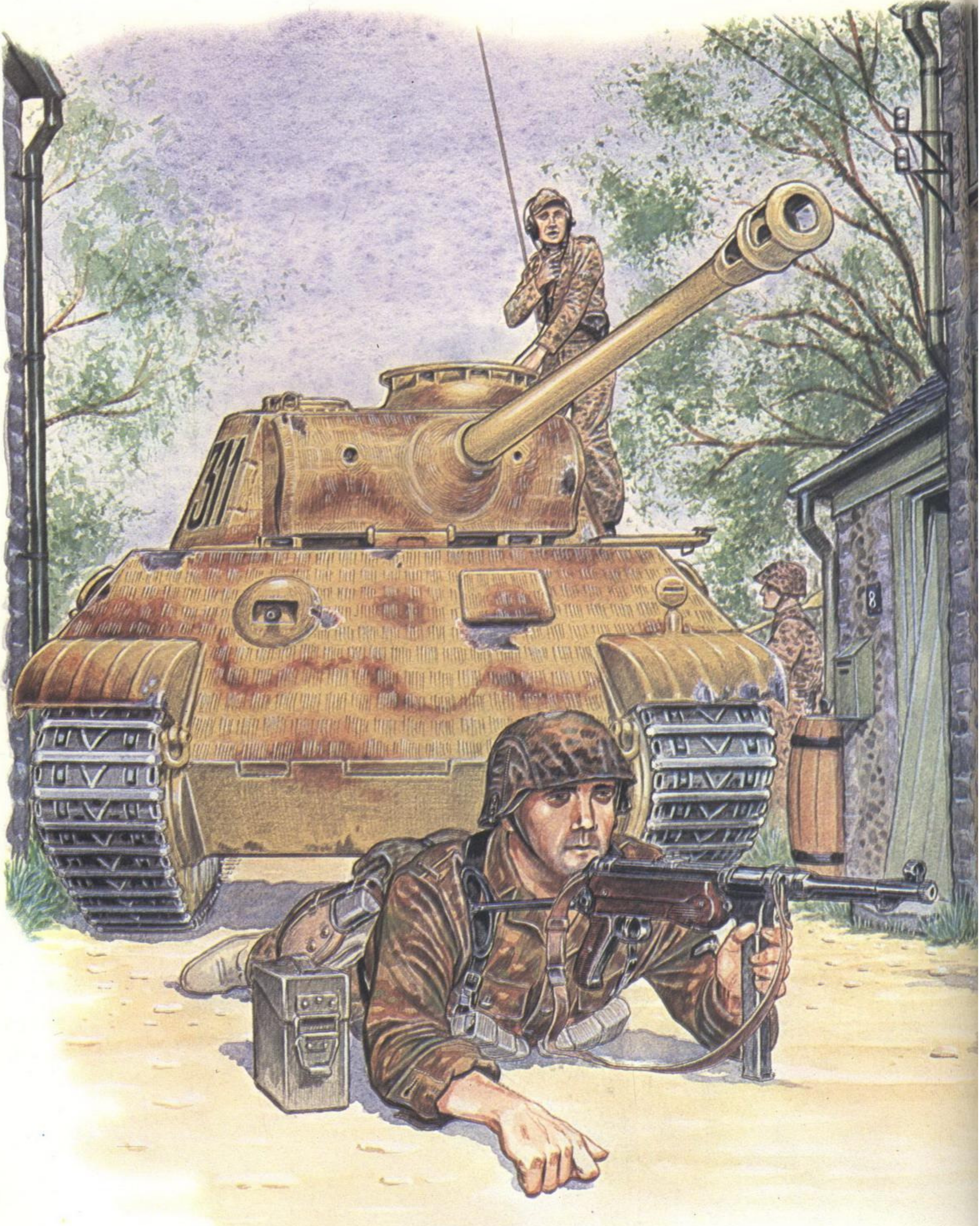
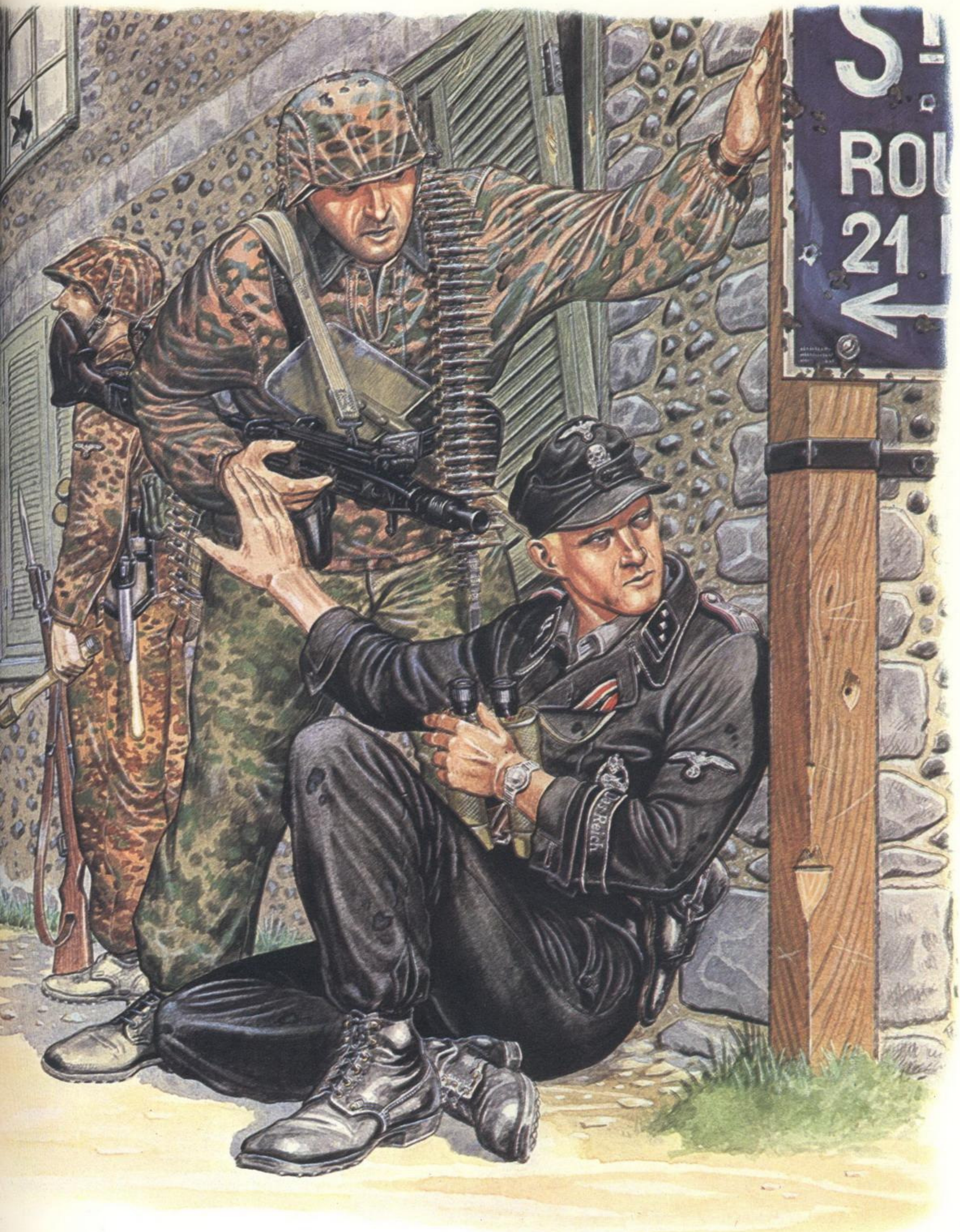


C Officers' conference before Kharkov, February 1943





D Panzer-Grenadiers with PzKw V Panther Ausf.A, Normandy, July 1944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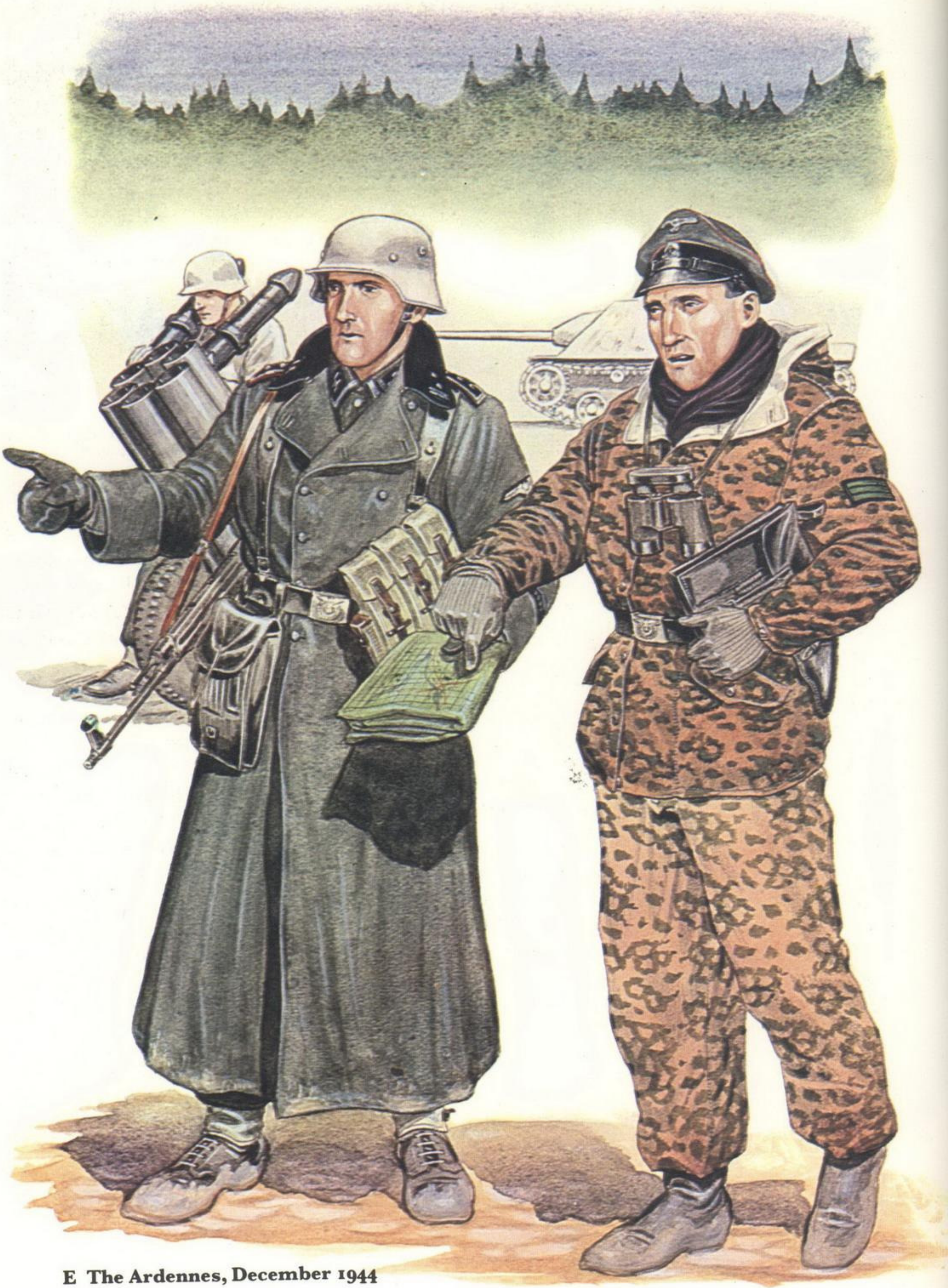

E The Ardennes, December 1944

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Avec annotations en français sur les planches en couleur

Mit Aufzeichnungen auf deutsch über die Farbtafeln

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